

**THE ROLE OF THE CHAIR OF GOVERNORS IN SCHOOL  
GOVERNANCE – A VIEW FROM THE CHAIR**

**DOCTORATE IN EDUCATION  
UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE**

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2001

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I certify that all material in this thesis which has not been my own work has been identified and that no material is included which has been submitted for any other award or qualification.

Signed

*Malcolm R Gudy*

Date

*21 August 2000*

## **Dedication**

**To my family** - this thesis would not have been possible without the support of my family. For those missing hours, days and months as a husband and father, thank you for your patience and understanding.

**To my employers** – South Tyneside MBC supported me financially through the degree and showed foresight in supporting such a course of study.

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**To Chairs of Governing Bodies** – all Chairs who were part of this study and to Chairs who may benefit from this study

# **THE ROLE OF THE CHAIR OF GOVERNORS IN SCHOOL GOVERNANCE – A VIEW FROM THE CHAIR.**

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **THE ROLE OF THE CHAIR OF GOVERNORS IN SCHOOL GOVERNANCE – A VIEW FROM THE CHAIR.**

Since the introduction of Local Management of Schools (LMS) as a result of the 1988 Education Reform Act (ERA), the role of the school governing body has evolved and been refined by successive legislative acts and consequent regulations. In recognition of this development, governing bodies have been the subject of a number of research studies eg Kogan et al (1984), Earley (1994), Deem et al (1995) and Scanlon et al (1999), all examining a range of themes from role and context, composition and early development, citizenship and effectiveness.

Such research provides the context for this study into the role of the Chair of a school governing body. Other than Esp and Saran (1995), Shearn et al (1995) and Scanlon et al (1999), little research has been conducted into the role of the Chair. It is the contention of this study that, through incremental legislative acts, statutory instruments, circulars and other official DfEE documentation, the role of the Chair has become central not only to the workings of the governing body but also central to the operation of school governance as seen through the eyes of the DfEE. This position has, however, not been a planned progression of deliberate steps but an unplanned incremental development. The Chair of governors, it is argued here, has emerged as a “key player” in the operation of school governance.

The research was conducted in four LEAs in the North East of England using a number of research instruments which included a questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, diary recording, recorded observations and documentation analysis. The questionnaire was sent to all Chairs of governors in three LEAs – Northshire, Newshire and Sunshire. The sample was 320 and the response rate was 43%. The interviews were conducted with twelve Chairs in three LEAs with the author’s LEA



of Southshire replacing Sunshire. Three interviews were also conducted with the Governor Training Co-ordinators in three LEAs in the region. Eight Chairs of governors were invited to record a structured diary for a period of four weeks and six Chairs did so. Three governing body meetings in the author's LEA were observed and recorded using an observation schedule. Finally, in addition to the close scrutiny of all legislative acts since 1980 with regard to education and school governance and other official documentation, minutes of meetings of school governing bodies in Southshire for the academic year 1998-99 were examined.

The findings from this localised study show that the Chairs' perceive themselves as "key players", with the Head teacher, in the operation of school business. This is supported by factors such as the amount of time spent by Chairs on school business, their role in the committee structure of governing bodies, their working relationships with Heads and the routes of contact to the DfEE and LEA. Whilst pressures continue to grow and the pace of change quickens, Chairs feel that they are able to cope.

Evidence of tensions in the relationships between Chair and Head were found to be less than expected and where they did exist, they were largely as a result of difficult inter-personal relationships rather than policy differences. The research also shows a lack of formal and informal contact between Chairs. There is no self-supporting network at local, regional or national level. Chairs' acknowledged the importance of training but were willing to demote its priority in the face of other factors eg budgets. Chairs did not access training for themselves.

The research concludes with the need to re-assess the role of the Chair in the light of the key functions now allocated to the position by legislation and the growing significance the position has in the operation of effective school governance.

# **CHAPTER I**

## **ORIGINS OF THE STUDY OF THE ROLE OF THE CHAIR OF GOVERNORS**

### **Research Question**

The question addressed in this research is : “What perceptions do Chairs of school governing bodies have with reference to their role?”.

The research question has a number of sub-sets:

- How has the governor constituency from which the Chair is drawn changed?
- Has there been an increase in the duties and responsibilities of Chairs since the introduction of Local Management of Schools? (LMS).
- How do Chairs perceive their relationships with other ‘players’ in the field ( ie fellow governors, fellow Chairs, LEA, DfEE).

In addressing this question and associated sub-sets, the hypothesis to be tested is that this author believes that there has been an increase in duties and responsibilities in the role of the Chairs in the period since 1986 which has not been developed in planned or structured way. Further, that there is an emerging belief amongst Chairs of Governors that they are now key players in assisting in the development of the effectiveness of a school alongside Head Teachers. Finally, that recent legislation has projected the Chair of governors into an almost semi-professional role in being the arbiter of decision making with reference to Head Teacher and the governing body.

This research was conducted solely with Chairs of governors and no other major player in the field of school governance or educational leadership was involved.

Grace’s (1995) approach to School Leadership in focussing upon Head Teachers was a guide in the modelling of this research in approaching school governance issues from the perspective of the Chairs of Governors.

## **Context**

It is an interesting challenge to write about educational policy at the dawn of a new millennium when the world in education has spent most of the last quarter of a century under the influence of a particular set of ideologies only to be usurped (some may say otherwise) at the last hurdle by a change of government whose agenda was at the same time all embracing yet contained elements of a radical alternative agenda.

The challenge lies in trying to make sense of data collected in the period of the first years of a New Labour Government which was produced by 'players in the field' (Chairs of governors) who were largely the products of a system initiated by and developed (or be it haphazardly) by a government of a different political persuasion who created a particular educational climate post 1988.

The challenge also lies in using and interpreting texts which have been written in the climate of educational policy making which lasted almost a generation and which must have 'contextualised' and influenced the approach to thinking about education policy analysis.

Ranson (1988) writing in the months before the Education Bill became the 1988 Education Reform Act states:

"The Education Reform Bill is a centre piece in the constitution of a new moral and political order of individual rights and public accountability of government to consumer choice in the market place. It is the moral order of individual self interest in a market society" (p 14).



Similar views were expressed by others (Ball 1990, Feintuck 1994) in commenting upon the application of the free market to education yet questioning its appropriateness. This study is written at a time when that 'quasi-market' philosophy is being removed from mainstream thinking and the re-emergence of partnership and co-operation is replacing the dogma of competition in its purest form. This recent change of governmental approach needs to be borne in mind when reading such texts.

The speed of change is also a challenge. Ironically, change is perhaps one of the few constant factors in the educational world in the last 25 years. Reading Ball's 'Politics and Policy Making in Education', published in 1990 and reproduced in 1992 and 1995 is a challenging and stimulating text. There appear numerous references to the DES (Department for Education and Science) yet there is no mention of the Department for Education or even its successor the Department for Education and Employment. The Teacher Training Agency is not in existence at this point. The Schools Curriculum and Assessment Authority has not yet been approved and has since disappeared. OFSTED is unknown. In 1990 Standard Attainment Tests, target setting, the Literacy and Numeracy Hour did not exist.

Today, such terms and organisations are the language of everyday life in staffrooms, governors' meetings and LEA offices. The purpose of illustrating this point in this way is that within a very short space of time, not only has an educational climate begun to change but the details of the educational agenda have begun to change. Placing the study of the role of the Chair of a governing body in context in such a changing educational environment is therefore fraught with interpretational difficulties. This being understood, it is necessary to explain the reasons for such a study given the outline of the challenges above.

## **The origins of the study**

The origins of this study lie in three areas. Firstly, in the author's experience as an Education Officer with a Metropolitan Borough Council with responsibility for all matters relating to School Governance. Involved in the management of a team of officers operating a central school governors clerking system, this allowed a unique opportunity to observe, at close hand, the ways in which governing bodies came to terms with Local Management of Schools and all of the consequent initiatives. It allowed the author to observe and participate in discussions on the issues of delegation to Head Teachers, the determination of delegation and remits to committees and the myriad decisions which governing bodies were required to make with regard to personnel policies, pay policy, curriculum policies and a host of others. It allowed the author, at close hand, to observe the interaction of governors with the Head Teacher and members of senior management (if invited to attend). These observations, all gained during the carrying out of professional duties as an officer, were also informed by research being carried out on the general area of school governors (Earley 1994, Deem 1993, Deem et al 1995, Esp and Saran 1995, Scanlon et al 1999) the writings of Joan Sallis (1988, 1995) and Ball (1990, 94) and the increasing number of publications from the DES, DFE and DFEE and other agencies such as the National Association of Governors and Managers and the National Governors Council to say nothing of OFSTED and the Audit Commission.

Such observations led the author to conclude that there was the potential for an increase in tension between school governors and the Head Teacher, and between Governor, Head Teacher and the LEA, if such tensions were not managed. To manage to deflate such tensions, to avoid such tensions through good planning and communication was a task not to be underestimated, but who should be doing it?



Huckman (1994) argues that the probability of tensions arises due to the limiting features of governors' attitudes and capabilities.

"Their (Governors) chances of being effective members are affected by the potential conflict which exists in governing bodies between the "professional" members (head teachers and LEA representatives) and the 'lay' members (parents, governors and co-opted members) ..... Tension on governing bodies can be caused by the need for governors to be supportive of a school's efforts while maintaining the objectivity by their monitoring role. Unless carefully handled the monitoring performance can also lend to a deterioration in the relationship between governors and heads and members of staff". (p 147)

This author's emerging view was that the role of the Chair of governors became increasingly important in this area.

A second reason for this area of study was the author's own experience as a governor. For almost 15 years, the author served as a governor of special, primary and comprehensive schools, both maintained and aided, as an LEA nominated governor. During this period of time and due to the experiences across the range of schools, the author became knowledgeable about the workings of governing bodies and indeed observed the changes that were taking place. This pace of change quickened after the 1986 Education Act (No.2) and fairly galloped along after the 1988 Education Reform Act in terms of the responsibilities delegated to governing bodies. The author's observations, however, were based on more subtle changes taking place. Such changes, not reflected in all schools, but sufficiently evident to hint at future developments, were more to do with the beginnings of change in the perception of governors that the meetings of the governing body were more than a

conventional termly meeting to support the Head Teacher in his/her endeavours; they were more to do with the gradual recognition, especially by parent governors, that their voice could count; they were to do with the greater emphasis on behalf of the Head Teacher to recognise these expectations and to put in place strategies to satisfy or placate governors. As Grace (1995) records in one of his Headship interviews:-

"Dealing with the Governing Body was something that took an hour or two a month. Suddenly, overnight, the Education Reform Act has made it a major part of my job, more than anything - its not just altered my job, it's altered my life ..... there are very few days, certainly no weeks, when I do not either have to be in contact with the Chairman of governors, having meetings with the Chairman or having meetings with other Governors. Having much longer meetings and preparing papers falls at my door (Male secondary Head (7))" (p 82)

The reference to the 'overnight' effect of the ERA is perhaps an exaggeration to illustrate a general point which was felt by many participants in Grace's study. Certainly the author's personal observations pointed to a much slower, gradual process of change but nevertheless inexorable. The Head Teacher position vis-a-vis his or her governing body in the mid 80's was very different from the position in the mid 90's.

The author's personal experience led toward the view that, whilst a subtle gradual change in the balance between the Head and governors was taking place, a crucial element in this process was the role of the Chair of governors and the personal and particular characteristics and beliefs of the Chair.



Certainly one of the observed changes, both from personal experiences as a governor and from a professional education officer position, was the concern expressed by Sallis (1977) post Taylor Report that:

"authorities hold on to this (political chairmanship) after giving up majorities, since the political chairman has so much power to control what is discussed and what information is made available ...." (p 101)

This observation was subject to change in the light of this research. The 'political' appointed chair was still a reality but less so than before; the 'spiritual' chair in an aided school was still a reality, but less so than before. The author's interest lay in what such changes had in store for the future.

The third reason for such a study lay in the belief that the role of the Chair of the governing body was one that was going through a 'trial and error' transformation during the bedding down of Local Management of Schools. By the time local management had settled down and was working it was subject to incremental change and as a consequence the role of the Chair began to change.

The author's own personal and professional observations led to a belief that the role of the Chair of governors became more 'pivotal' in the workings of the governing body than previous. By pivotal, it is meant, more significant, in both the potential powers invested in the Chair by delegation under the 1988 Education Reform Act and subsequent Statutory Instruments but also by the realignment, by the DfE and then the DfEE, of communicating directly to Chairs of governors in addition to communicating with Head Teachers. Indeed, in recent years, an often heard complaint from Head Teachers was that official documentation from the DFEE was

routed through the Chairman of governors first. Such personal observations were also informed by the findings of researchers eg. Thody (1994) Grace (1995) and Esp and Saran (1995).

Huckman (Thody et al 1994) writing at a time when the phased introduction of LMS was almost complete, quotes a Chair of governors at Eastlyn Infants School:

"Local Management of Schools is an enormous intrusion to competent heads. Governors are, after all, mostly lay people, learning on the job. She's [the Head Teacher] having to refer to us when she must have known all along that we have no views to express" (p 156).

Even at that early stage of development in this new arena, Huckman argues the fact that the Chairs of governing bodies and Chairs of Finance committees gained closer access than other participants to the font of decision making could be accounted for by the special roles which they performed within governing bodies. The concept of "Bargaining Zones" was formalised (p 155).

There is implicit in such comments a sense of cohabitation by the Chair of governors to the Head Teacher. A sense that this responsibility has been thrust upon the role, it is not of the Chair's creating, but lets make the best of it.

This is not unnatural. The author's research position is - has the role of Chair changed now that the immediate effects of LMS have "bedded down"? The context of this position is one framed in a time when the whole range of responsibilities thrust upon governors is being realised and then tested, be it in terms of accountability over standards in the classroom or litigation in tribunals.

As Esp and Saran (1995) comment:

"Governors were then 'somewhat distanced from the management of the school' but now have increased responsibilities, closer relationships with the school and a greater workload". Chairs still provide an important link with the community but are now much busier as managers of the governing body and its business" (p 70).

Esp and Saran (1995) also make reference to the fragile relationship between Head and Chair of governors and that there was a mutual awareness of this, quoting one Head:

"I am prepared to accept the situation that I am not fully in control.

Colleagues wonder how I manage. He (the Chair) wears me out .... he keeps me on my toes .... I don't want to spoil a good relationship" (p 72).

The same Head went on to say:

"I have 99 per cent control. We are working together. That's a change for him" (p 72)

## **Conclusion**

This "relationship" between Head and Chair is dependant upon many variables. Any number of quotes from Esp and Saran or Grace could have demonstrated a different perspective. The point in raising this issue is that the role of Chairs, the views of Chairs and the hopes of Chairs in carrying out their work has not been the subject of research to the same degree as other aspects of the school governance. To be such a

pivotal figure and yet not be subject to a research investigation leaves a particular gap in the knowledge of the workings of governing bodies.

This research is aimed at contributing toward the filling of the gap.



## **CHAPTER 2**

### **THE CONTEXT OF POLICY IN RELATION TO THE ROLE OF THE CHAIR OF GOVERNORS**

#### **Introduction**

The nature and pace of change as referred to in the previous chapter is worth re-emphasising once again by reference to Handy and Aitken (1986) in order to put this chapter in context. Handy and Aitken identify the three main features on which the functioning of a school depends: - organisation; relationships; the support of the wider community.

These three features are common to both primary and secondary schools and they are interlinked to each other. Using the example of "relationships", the authors argue;

"Heads know how time-consuming and challenging this task of 'corporate management' - for that is what it is - can be. They leave their deputies and heads of faculty to share the responsibility .... But again, that is not all; senior management is not the whole organisation. The contribution and attitude of the 'ordinary' member of staff need to be recognised ...." (p 50).

Handy and Aitken accept that schools are complex organisations, more so than other organisations because of the complications laid upon them and because of the critical place that they have in society. They also argue that the management of schools is becoming more difficult as change is accelerating.

Yet in all of their observations on schools as organisations, the role of corporate management and the interplay of organisations, relationships and the wider community, there is only one acknowledged reference to the role of governors,

namely, a simple statement on the school being accountable to the board of governors.

This text, written in 1986, before the influence of the 1988 Education Reform Act, illustrates the commonly held view that management and leadership of a school were the domain of the Head Teacher, together with the assistance of his or her senior management team.

A decade later, official DFEE circulars relating to the Grant for Education and Training (GEST) and later the Standards Fund, were clearly identifying the role of governors in the management of the school to the extent of earmarking financial resources for their training in order that they may carry out that role.

As a result of the 1992 Education Act which established the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED), the first and subsequent revisions of the Framework for Inspection (1994, 1997, 2000) included a section on “Management and Leadership” which included the role of the Governing Body. Indeed, in the whole of the inspection process from ‘pre’ through to ‘post’ inspection, the governors had a clear role to play.

The intervening period, since the publication of Handy and Aitken's book until the publication of the Standards and Framework Act 1998, has seen a transformation in the role and relative position of the governing body. In this transformation the role of the Chair of governors has not been unaffected. The purpose of this chapter is to trace that change.



## **Policy Context - The Beginnings of the Legislative Framework**

If there is 'modern' starting point for the examination of the role of school governors and by implication, the role of the Chair of governors, it could be argued that it was marked by the establishment of the Taylor Committee by Reg Prentice, Secretary of State for Education in 1975. The terms of reference were:-

"To review the arrangements for the management and government of maintained primary and secondary schools in England and Wales, including the composition and function of boards of managers and governors and their relationships with Local Education Authorities, with the head teachers and staff of schools with parents of pupils and with the local community at large; and to make recommendations" (Sallis 1977 p 113).

Whilst the concept of school governing bodies was established in the 1944 Education Act ,by the early 1970's, with the change in local government, the emergence of comprehensive education and the growing criticism of the then present system of managing school governance, the publication of 'A New Partnership for our School' (DES 1977), laid the basis for future thinking about the role of school governance.

Issues such as the composition of governing bodies, representation for parents and staff, responsibilities for curriculum and finance and terms of office were addressed and duly included in the Report. The Report did influence the agenda of school governors for the next ten years even though only some of its recommendations were implemented immediately.

Sallis (1977) remained sceptical, however, about the potential for change in the balance of power between the various players being introduced to school governance. With reference to the recommendation of the Taylor Report that the governing body should be able to select any of its members as Chair, except a paid member of the school staff, Sallis wrote:

"I predict a strong political resistance to allow anyone other than a paid member of the school staff to be chairman. I have found Authorities hold on to this even after giving up ....., since the political chairman has so much power to control what is discussed and what information is made available, quite apart from the occasions when he is empowered to act alone, that the last vestiges of closed government could vanish with him". (p 100-101)

This 'strong political resistance' was a significant factor for many years in many LEAs and to some extent, a remnant remains.

Deem (1994) bears witness to this observation. A decade or so on from Sallis' 'strong political resistance', the research of Deem et al in examining the reconstitution of governing bodies in 1988 found that in the pilot studies, governing bodies and the election of Chairs in the Autumn of 1988 were carried out in a manner and speed such that new governors could hardly have known what was happening. Deem states:

"Although some of the chairs so elected have subsequently been replaced by others, our interviews with chairs of governors confirm that the party political governor and the old-established 'pillar of the community' governor remain central figures in our ten case-study bodies" (p 65)

A further ten years on - has this position changed? The evidence from this study would suggest that there has been a change in this position albeit with some differences between LEAs.

In the three LEAs in the study who participated in the questionnaire, the breakdown of the category of Chair was identified. In the Northshire example, LEA Chairs consisted of only 30% of all Chairs with the co-opted category of governor leading the way with almost 37%. Indeed, non LEA Chairs outnumbered LEA Chairman by 2:1.

In Newshire, however, the picture was different. 58% of the Chairs were from the LEA category. In Sunshire, less than 50% of the Chairs belong to the LEA Governor category, although it remains the highest individual category.

To offer a further comparator, in a neighbouring large semi-rural LEA, the LEA governor category of Chair was 46%. The overall picture therefore, is one in which the 'strong political resistance' as identified by Sallis, is being broken down, more so in some LEAs than in others. The emergence of parent governors, albeit marginal to other categories as Chair, is a manifestation of this change alone.

Indeed Grace (1995) reflects a similar perspective in relation to the position of Head Teachers:

"Autocratic headship may have given ground to professional headship but the professional culture of the 1960's and 1970's still reflects a strong sense of interference in the life of the school which was not welcomed from parents, governors or other external agencies. The intention of the educational legislation of the 1980's which re empowered the governing bodies of English



state schools was that a concept of lay 'interference' should be replaced by a legitimate involvement of parental, business and community interests in the operation of schools" (p 77)

Grace contextualised such views by reference to Deem and Brehony (1992):

"we must be careful not to attribute too much influence to educational legislation" (Grace p 77).

This is a cautionary point well made. The evidence from this present study shows that there has been a beginning of a change in the position of Chair, albeit with some significant variations between LEAs. Nevertheless, the time lag between the passing of legislation, the process of implementation and the evidence to suggest the effects of such a change, can be considerable. Application is not always an immediate consequence of intent.

What, therefore, was this intent? What did the legislation of the 1980's and 1990's intend with respect to governing bodies and by implication, Chairs of governing bodies? Was there a consistency of approach? A build up of incremental legislation to achieve a desired goal? An analysis of the educational legislation in the economic and political climates of the period with a specific focus on the role of Chair may assist in answering some of the above questions.

This analysis will also hope to demonstrate that, with the passing of educational legislation between 1980 and 1998 and the issuing of Circulars and Statutory Instruments, the role of the Chair of governors became more clearly identified, was

given greater significance and carried with the role greater responsibilities as the years progressed.

### **1980 Education Act - From Managers to Governors**

A random examination of the index of studies of school governance is likely to demonstrate the relative paucity of references to the 1980 Education Act in comparison to later Education Acts. Those passed in 1986 and 1988 included school governance issues as part of the legislative package.

Perhaps this should not be surprising. However, the use of such a crude measurement belies the fact that the 1980 Education Act was the first piece of education legislation dealing with issues of school governance after the publication of the Taylor Report (1977). As such, it brought with it many expectations. It was also the first piece of education legislation under the new Conservative Government and it carried with it the beginnings of the hallmarks of a 'market orientated' 'consumer led' system. The issues of parental preference in school admissions and the establishment of the Assisted Places Scheme were manifestations of a type of approach to education policy which was refined in later legalisation (although it is questionable whether a conscious link is evident to later legislation in moving deliberately along a set path).

The relevance of the 1980 Education Act to school governance is significant for three reasons. Firstly, at a cosmetic level, the Act, at a stroke, abolished the use of the phrase school manager for every piece of educational and related Act from 1944 until 1980 (Schedule 1). In its place the terms governor, instruments of government and articles of government became the new terminology.

Secondly, it introduced the concept of broader representation in the inclusion of two parent governors (Section 5) and at least one but not more than two teacher governors (Section 7). This was, as later legislation was to prove, a quite fundamental step in the gradual transformation of governing bodies from the pre-Taylor to the post 1988 Education Reform Act position. The introduction of a parent governor was in tune with the general thrust of other legislation during this period in attempting to introduce a broader constituency into community decision making.

However as Deem et al (1995) argue:

"The 1980 Education Act had made parent representation on governing bodies a legal requirement, but there were wide differences during the 1980's between the practices of LEAs in relation to governing bodies. Some encouraged parents and gave governing bodies a good deal of advice and support, whereas others left them to their own devices; a third approach was to restrain governing bodies with a complex web of local bureaucracy" (p 8)

Nevertheless, the ground was laid.

Thirdly, and almost unseen in the Act, was Section 4, subsection 2 where "the Secretary of State may make regulations ... for the provision for the election of a Chair by the Governors of any such school" (p 5).

In terms of education legislation and subsequent school government regulations, the Chair of governors had come of age.



## **1986 Education Act (No 2) - The Foundations Laid**

If the 1980 Education Act 'opened the door' to the developing role of school governorship, then the 1986 Education Act set out the path which was to be followed. In terms of the basic provisions for the structure of school governorship, today relatively little changed in the intervening years. Even the changes to school government regulations in the 1998 Standards and Framework Act were a refinement of the 1986 Acts and subsequent regulations.

This 1986 Education Act (and for that matter the 1988 Education Reform Act) became law in a period when legislative moves toward 'choice' in relation to a wide range of services was at a high point.

As Deem et al (1995) state:

"The changes to school governance should not be seen standing alone. Other aspects of UK educational reform and social policy in general can be seen to be clearly linked. These include: an emphasis on public 'choice' in relation to a wide range of services which are or once were in public ownership; the development of quasi-markets ... for the distribution of public services, so that in state-funded schools money follows pupils, the priority of the consumer or quasi-consumer of public services over the producers of those services, so that the consumer can supposedly help to raise standards of provision" (p 17)

The manifestation of this 'public choice', 'quasi-market' and 'consumerist' philosophy was demonstrated by the parity of parental representation to LEA representation on school governing bodies; in other words, reducing the number of political

appointments to governing bodies and in the introduction of co-opted governors. The Circular 7/87 defined the purpose of the co-opted governor.

"The governing body for any county, controlled or maintained special school which is constituted under an instrument of government ... shall recommend (with reasons) to any governing body who will succeed them persons who belong to the community served by the school and who are, in their opinion, suitable for appointment as co-opted members of the governors" (p 11)

As such it was up to each governing body to decide who was representative of the local business community. The presence of a member of the local business community was deemed to be a significant move to free up the thinking process of governing bodies and enhance their 'approach to the business management of the school'.

Accountability was also increased by the requirement to produce an annual report to parents on the work of the governing body and an annual meeting had to be held to discuss this report. Accountability also increased with the responsibility for any funds delegated to the schools, joint responsibility for the appointment of Head and Deputy Head and a collaborative role in curriculum policy.

Whilst some of these issues foreshadowed the greater delegation of the 1988 Education Act, the substantive school government changes of the 1986 Act stood the test of time. The guidance on school governance was becoming detailed and complex with the establishment of instruments and articles in which the powers and duties, now becoming quite extensive, were outlined. It was in this climate of change that the role of the Chair began to slowly advance from the foundations laid in the 1980 Act.



Reference to the role of the Chair gradually began to appear in a formal context. For example, in the Model Articles for County and Maintained Special Schools, it was stated that the "Governors Report shall 'name and give the address of the Chairman of the Governing Body and their clerk' " (pg 8).

For the first time, the role of the Chair of a school governing body entered the public domain in that any parent of the school and local community who read the governing body's annual report would have access to the Chair of governors.

The ever increasing move to greater accountability and the pervasive influence of the Parents' Charter provided the context for the emphasis given to parental accountability in the Annual Parents Meeting also. On such an event, the role of the Chair of governors was thrust into the public arena in such a way that many Chairs had not prepared for.

Martin and Ranson (1995) in their research into the role of the annual parents meeting argue that, in order to have an effective and legitimate role, the meetings have to evolve. They identify three models reflecting three stages of development. At the first stage, that of validation, parents merely validate what is put to them, largely by the Head Teacher and Chair of governors. At the second stage, that of interaction, parents are involved in a 'Learning Workshop' in which, as participants, they are involved as equal partners. At the third stage, that of partnership, governors, parents and teachers enter into a public partnership which holds them jointly responsible for the governance and development of the school. Adversarial relationships are eschewed.

Martin and Ranson believe that most annual parents meetings, at the time of writing, are stuck at the first stage. Perhaps this is not too surprising given that the business meeting format and its accompanying formalities are, arguably, responsible for much of the limited enthusiasm and even disenchantment parents are expressing in relation to the Annual Parents Meeting (p 203).

Given, therefore, that the more pro-active stages of development of annual parents meetings have generally not been reached, it falls to the Chair of governors, given Martin and Ranson's analysis of stage one, together with the Head Teacher, to carry the meeting.

".... Too many Chairs made the annual report the single focus of the agenda. Often this involved reading point by point. There was little interaction between Chair and governors; indeed, in many meetings, the Chair was the only governor to speak". (Martin and Ranson p 197)

The role of the Chair of governors therefore, in both the publication of the Annual Report, by being named, and in the organisational arrangements for the Annual Parents Meetings, begins to emerge as an official position of some significance in the wider public domain than the rather enclosed world of a termly governors meeting.

As Martin and Ranson state:-

"Parents can be daunted by the exercise of authority: the Chair's position is powerful ...." (p 201)

The regulations following the 1986 (No 2) Education Act also strengthened the role of the Chair of governors in other directions. Under Section 8(7)(b) of the 1986 (No 2)

Education Act, the Chair, or in his or her absence, the Vice Chair, was given the power to act in cases of urgency. This power was enacted under the School Government Regulations 1989 S1 1988/1503.

23 (1) "The Chairman of the governing body of a school shall have power to discharge, as a matter of urgency, any function of the governing body of the school".

23 (2) "The circumstances are that a delay in exercising the function would be likely to be seriously detrimental to the interests of the school, or to the interests of any registered pupil at the school, his parent, or a person employed at the school".

Clause 23 (1), therefore, amongst many in the 1989 School Government regulations, delegated to the Chair of governors significant power to act in cases of urgency.

The caveat to this was that, as long as the actions taken by the Chair were reported to the next meeting of the Governing Body and were agreed, then such action was acceptable. Such potential power in the hand of one person illustrates the fact that the role of the Chair, by incremental steps, was becoming a very powerful position. The exercise of such power would depend upon circumstances and the resources and sense of purpose of the Chair of governors.

Before leaving the significance of the 1986 (No 2) Education Act, it is useful to note the content of Section 15, subsection 9 of the Model Articles of Government for Aided Schools. That subsection states;



"The Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body shall both have power to suspend the Head Teacher for misconduct or other urgent courses pending a decision of the Governing Body".

As the employing body, the governing body of an Aided School has a greater range of powers and duties than a maintained school, of which, as a result of the 1986 (No 2) Education Act, this was one. Regulations following the 1988 Education Reform Act were to extend this power to all delegated schools.

Nevertheless, in the Model Articles for Aided Schools, significant powers were given to the Chair of governors to take action against the Head Teacher of a school if circumstances required - a further recognition of the potential power of the Chair of governors.

It is perhaps worth noting Grace's (1995) comments on the dilemmas of Head Teachers at the time of such changes in educational legislation and the implications of social changes.

"The ideological changes of the 1980s and 1990s, in particular the influence of the New Right agencies in both, America and Britain, have broken that historical settlement by, in effect, denying the existence of such constraints as 'rarity' or of 'common good'.

The apparent triumph of liberal individualism as a decisive political, economic and cultural doctrine and its implementation in terms of educational policy and practice provided the majority of Catholic Head Teachers in this study with the greatest challenge they had yet faced in their careers in school leadership".

(p 178)

In this context and the context of the range of dilemmas that Catholic Head Teachers faced on issues such as admissions, exclusions, grant maintained status, moral leadership and the influence of market values underpinning much of the identified thought of the period, the potential for conflict with governing bodies and the potential for Head Teacher/Chair tensions were greater. In such circumstances, the significance of Section 15 Sub-Section 9 needs to be understood.

### **1988 Education Reform Act - Climatic Change**

The 1986 (No 2) Education Act and its subsequent regulations created the technical parameters in which governing bodies were to operate. The 1988 Education Reform Act created the climate in which they were to grow in significance.

The climate, however, was not one which met with universal approval in the late 1980s. Ball (1990) states:

"The Education Reform Act is clearly not an easy document to read - it is complex, multi-faceted and a product of several different sets of interests and influences. For most teachers and parents the significance of the Act lies in its direct and immediate effect on their classroom work and on the prospects of their child. The Act, even those sections related especially to schools, tends to be interpreted and responded to as bits and pieces. But it is not in its conception or its purpose a bits and pieces Act. At the heart of the Act is an attempt to establish the basis of an education market. The key provisions of the Act replace the principle of equal access to education for all with the principle of differentiation in the market place. In order to appreciate the ways

in which an education market is being established by the ERA several pieces of the Act have to be put together and linked to previous Conservative policy. The elements of this market are choice, competition, diversity, funding and organisation" (p 60-61)

Ranson (1988), whilst acclaiming the principal shift in direction of the then Education Reform Bill - towards public involvement and accountability - but at the same time deriding the means, also stresses underlying concerns.

"The Education Reform Bill is a centrepiece in the constituting of a new moral and political order of individual rights and public accountability of government to consumer choice in the market place. It is a moral order of individual self interest in a market society" (p 14)

This 'climate', therefore, was one in which governing bodies found themselves in the midst of huge change in powers and responsibilities which were to cascade downward from the Department of Education and Science for the next few years in terms of statutory instruments and circulars.

The significance of the 1988 ERA in relation to the role of the Chair of the governing body therefore has to be seen from a dual perspective; firstly of regulation and secondly of the new role within the new climate.

The regulatory perspective is set down in the Education (School Government) Regulations 1989 (SI 1989/1503) which came into force on the 8th September 1989. The regulations in effect build upon the 1987 regulations leaving the 1986 (No 2) Education Act relatively unchanged.



The significance of these regulations, however, with further relatively minor amendments in 1991, lies in that they are (and a more substantial review as a result of the 1998 Standards and Framework Act in 1999) largely still in force. Furthermore, the 1989 regulations form the base platform for all reference to the role of the Chair in the years following the 1988 ERA when the incremental introduction of Local Management of Schools took place. Only recently, following the 1998 Standards and Framework Act, has there been changes made to the regulations. The changes outlined in the 1999 regulations do not lessen the role of the Chair. Indeed, if anything, the role of the Chair is further enhanced.

An examination of the 1989 regulations (with amendments from the 1993 and 1996 Acts) in respect of the role of the Chair of governors alone, illustrates the emerging significance of the role of the Chair.

**Regulation 9 Chairman and Vice Chairman of Governing Bodies & Meetings**

**(Paragraphs 1 - 6)**

**Regulation 10 Chairman and Vice-Chairman of Governing Bodies & Meetings**

**(Paragraphs 1 - 5)**

**Regulation 14 Proceedings of Meetings (Paragraph 1 and 5)**

**Regulation 19 Convening of Meetings (Paragraph 1 and 3)**

**Regulation 23 Power of Chairman or Vice-Chairman of Governing Bodies to act**

**in cases of emergency (Paragraph 1 - 4)**

**Regulation 24 Publication of Minutes and Papers (Paragraph 1)**

**Regulation 26 Establishment of Committees (Paragraph 4)**

**Regulation 30 Exclusion of Pupils from Schools (Paragraph 5)**

**Regulation 31 Appointment of Teachers into Certain Schools (Paragraph 5)**

The point can be illustrated by reference to Regulation 9. This regulation is concerned with the appointment and dismissal of the Chair or Vice-Chair of the governing body. The appointment procedure was laid out in previous regulations (1987) but the dismissal procedure (paragraph 3A subsections a - g) was as a result of the 1993 Education (School Government) (Amendment) Regulations (SI 1993/3107).

The very fact that such an addition was required in 1993 could lend itself to the argument that, by the time the Local Management of Schools had had time to 'bed down' in LEAs across the country and the role of the governing body was slowly emerging as one of greater significance in development of a school than ever before, the role of the Chair of governors was also emerging as a powerful position. This position could be misused and therefore, to offer a way forward, paragraph 3A was introduced. Irrespective of this line of argument, the very fact that it was considered necessary to extend Regulation 9 was sufficient to realise there growing significance of the Chair's position.

To have a poor Chair of a school governing body, at a time when a high degree of efficiency and effectiveness of a governing body was required in order to carry out the whole range of new and responsibilities, was a potentially severe and limiting factor.

Curtis (1994), in a survey of a sample of governors in South Oxfordshire to determine levels of effectiveness and efficiency, states:

"Reliance on well run meetings, centred upon the quality of the Chair. One governor commented on the:

"... excellent Chair who runs the meetings efficiently  
and who has done his homework before the meeting (LEA



Governor)"

If such expertise were not present, the basic performance suffered:

"poor chairmanship - too long an agenda - unhelpful time spent on minor issues"

reported a different LEA Governor in the survey. The quality of Chairmanship appears to be a critical factor in attaining a well organised governing body" (p 91)

A further comment, based on observations rather than research and reflective of a different 'climate' but which nevertheless supports this view, comes from Wragg and Partington (1980):

"The role of the Chairman in any committee is crucial. He sets the tone of the meeting, decides priorities, steers the groups through the business and liaises with the Head Teacher and LEA. No one should agree to taking on chairmanship of a governing body unless he is willing to work hard to make a success of the job. It is also for stayers and not sprinters" (p 81)

If the legislative perspective of the 1988 ERA and subsequent regulations and amendments informs us of the growing significance of the role of the Chair, the 'climate' created by the Act proves the testing ground.

Whilst the history of the Education Reform Act yet remains to be written, sufficient post 1988 writings exist to allow some perspective (Ball 1990, 1994, Levacic 1995, Feintuck 1994) to emerge. Levacic (1995) sees the original blueprint for local management in the Coopers and Lybrand report of 1988.

The report emphasised that local management required a cultural shift in schools and organisations, affecting their management functions and processes.

"The largest single change for schools will be in the attitude and culture reflecting a shift from an environment in which centrally determined programmes are administered locally to one on which the provision for education is locally managed. The differences between administration and management are considerable and necessitate a change in role for staff, head teachers and governors." (p 34)

It is this 'change in role for staff, head teachers and governors, which provided much food for thought and continues to do so - witness the need for "Guidance and Good Governance" DfEE 1996.

The Act devolved to governing bodies more duties and responsibilities - and therefore power - than anytime since the 1944 Education Act. Responsibilities included ensuring that the broad and balanced curriculum was provided, that the school's delegated budget was managed efficiently, that the staffing requirements of the school were fulfilled, and that admission arrangements for pupils were determined. With such responsibilities devolved, the 'old relationships' between Head Teacher and governors were to be tested, both directly and indirectly. Directly by determined players on both sides - head teachers and governors - although such overt struggles were not much in evidence given the national scale of change. Indirectly, by governing bodies having to address issues of school life at their termly and, with a growing frequency of occurrence, at committees, in a new climate of greater

responsibility and therefore a perceived greater expectation on the Head Teacher to 'report'.

Kenneth Baker, as new Secretary for State from mid-1986, took over the reigns of a Department that he felt was "directly anti-excellence, anti-selection and anti-market" and which was 'in league with the teacher unions, University Departments of Education, teacher training and local authorities."

(Baker 1993 p 160).

Shortly after his succession, Baker drafted a 'blue print for Education Reform' in December 1986 in which he outlined the two major ways forward - one of centralising the power to influence and determine the curriculum and the second of decentralising the running and control of schools. Within the decentralising measures, Baker states:-

"The weak link in this programme is the inadequacy of many governing bodies and the lack of financial management experience of heads and deputy heads ... it is essential that we get good people to serve as governors since they will have control over a sizeable budget; increased powers over the appointment of the head and increased power over school discipline" (p 480).

This decentralising theme worked its way through the 1988 ERA without a fully 'thought through' approach to what might happen 'if'. As Feintuck (1994) argues, it is perhaps surprising to find that an Act of such magnitude was followed not by a quiet period of 'bedding down' but instead by a period in which further significant developments have added unpredictable problems to the already immense task of implementing it. (p23) Many 'ifs' emerged and one was the potential for inbuilt



‘tension’ between the power players at school management level. Grace’s study (1995) illustrated more of the tensions that did exist from a Head Teacher perspective.

In discussing the power relations of school leadership in terms of change or continuity, Grace quotes the view of an infant school Head Teacher on her perception of the changes in the culture of school governance.

“The role of governors has certainly changed and with it the relationship with the Head Teacher. Some governors see the ERA as their way of exerting power but some are frightened by the power they separately hold.

Relationships with governing bodies vary from school to school. Some colleagues have very little say in what happens, they have to have governor permission for almost everything. Others manage to ‘manipulate’ their governing bodies and thereby retain some leadership of their school. One has to very carefully learn what games must be played and with whom. Much depends on the social and political constitution of governing bodies”. (p 88)

Grace uses the quote to illustrate, at the time of his research in 1993/94, the uncertainty as to what was the potential for future development – was it to be continued manifest leadership from Heads using strategies of governor management or governor dominance of Head Teacher leadership or the strengthening of sectional or particular interest groups in the running of schools? - a conundrum similar to that raised by Ball (1994) p 85.

Into this conundrum fell the role of the Chair of the governing body. By regulation, the Chair is given more powers and by creating the climate for a potential change in

the power relations, the Chair's role, all at once, takes on a greater significance. By the very process of implementing the Local Management of Schools scheme, each school governing body had to be consulted upon LMS proposals prior to submission to the DES and once implemented, had to make decisions on a whole range of issues. These included such matters as how much to delegate to the Head Teacher in terms of decision making to determining school disciplinary and grievance procedures amongst a whole host of other policy initiatives. The effectiveness and efficiency of such decision making often rested upon the part played by the Chair of governors in managing meetings when such decisions had to be made and the part played by the Head Teacher in drafting options for the governing body to consider. This point is underlined by Leighton (1995) when writing of her experiences as a Chair of governors in relation to effective governors.

“It seems vital that the Chair of governors and the Head pull together and in no way are seen to undermine each other” (p118)

Implicit in this statement is the view that the potential exists for such a relationship to be difficult; for ‘undermining’ to take place. The dual influences of regulating powers and the climate of changing power relations heralded a dawn of a new set of relationships in which the Chair of governors was a significant factor.

A similar emphasis was placed on the role of the Chair of governors by Deem, Brehony and Heath (1995) as a result of their findings in relation to the powers and political processes in which governors operate. Bearing in mind that the research was conducted in the period 1990-93 at a time when the delegation requirements of LMS were being put into place and not yet fully completed never mind ‘bedded down’, their observations still portrayed a very significant role for the Chair of governors.

“Head and Chairs are key movers in the governance of school and it was they who shared most awareness of such dimensional power and careful analysis of our field notes made whilst observing meetings confirmed our impressions gained from the interviews that the individuals holding these offices shaped much of what happened on governing bodies, both in connection with the allocative and authorative resources and in addition to decision making and agenda setting. In part, this was because they are those to whom other governors delegate things. Such delegation offers them considerable discretion in relation to decisions and agenda setting. As Clegg (1989) has noted, discretion is a major source of power in organisations.” (p 142)

This point of the almost ‘delegation by default’ to Chairs of governing bodies to indirectly (or directly) influence the course of events by having certain powers of decision making and agenda setting (a mix of strategy and custom and practice development) is borne out by reference to the findings of this current area of research. When asked to respond to the questions of which committees did they sit on and whether they also acted as Chair, a majority of the respondents indicated that they sat on most of the established committees and a majority stated that they also sat as Chair. (See Chapter 5.3 for a detailed analysis of this point)

It is tempting to be swayed by the persuasiveness of the role of Chair of the governing body extending his or her influence by their presence either as a governor or Chair of the committee. An inherent danger lies in the potential for committees with such a presence not to exercise an independent judgement outside of the influence of the main governing body when it comes to matters on which committees exercise ‘executive powers’ e.g. pay policy, discipline and grievance, exclusions etc. As one Head Teacher, Sid Slater put it (Hustler, Brighouse and Rudduck 1995).



“We work closely with the governors through committees and I work very closely with the chair and vice-chair’ (The Curriculum Sub-Committee will be involved in working with academic areas, but not the other governors)

p 79-80

In such instances, the experience, personality and vision of the Chair of governors become significant factors in whether a governing body conducts business in an effective and efficient way whilst at the same time promoting the ‘active citizenship’ concepts of Deem et al. (1995)

Levacic (1995 ) argues that early indicators in the working practices of LMS in addition to the role of governing bodies illustrated that ;

“... governing bodies’ working style has been considerably affected by LMS and is still evolving toward an accountability role.” (p 155)

Levacic believes that the evidence from the schools in her study shows that governors were mainly acting in advisory and supportive roles and that they were in a unequal partnership with Head Teachers (p134).

Yet Levacic did discern a slight difference in the active roles of Chair. In discussing the key role in local management, Levavic quotes a Chair of governors;

“The governors have a lot of confidence in the head, deputy and bursar. They are happy to accept the figures they put in front of us .... If things seemed to be going badly adrift , I could see us stepping in and being control”.

Levacic's purpose in using this quote was to illustrate that, in her research, the governors interviewed were the more active ones, since they were either Chair of the governing body or of the finance committee.

Clearly then, the 1988 ERA was seminal in developing the climate in which the role of the Chair of the governing body could flourish with the aid of the incremental but substantial regulatory powers given to that position. Whether the role of the Chair developed apace as a counterbalance to the role and influence of the Head Teacher, or as an equal partner in a joint enterprise or whether, as Thody (1994) argues, the Chair was selected by the "habit of consent" (p 25) in aligning his or her position with that of the Head and foregoing the role of the 'critical friend', depended upon the circumstances in each individual school, on the role of the Head and the perception of the role of the Chair of governors.

### **The Education (School Teacher Appraisal) Regulations 1991**

A further example of the growing recognition that the Chair of a governing body has a role to play in the organisational structures developed in the aftermath of the 1986 and 1988 Education Acts was the School Teacher Appraisal regulations of 1991.

The regulations were aimed at 'raising standards' before such a phrase became the watchword of all educational initiatives. The aim of appraisal was to "improve the quality of education for pupils through assisting school teachers to realise their potential and to carry out their jobs more effectively" (Section 4 paragraph 2 1991 Regulations)

The regulations made it a duty of the governing body of a maintained school to 'secure compliance' in their school with arrangements made by the local education authority to undertake appraisal procedures. These procedures had to include an appraisal cycle of two years to run continuously for all teachers and head teachers on contracts longer than one year's duration.

The role of the Chair of governors was formalised in Section 13 - 'Use and Retention of Appraisal Records'. Under the regulations the Chair of governors could, if he/she requested, receive a copy of the 'targets for action' which formed a separate annex to each teacher's appraisal statement. In the case of the Head Teacher, however, the Chair was to receive a copy of the full appraisal statement from the appraising body (Section 13 (2) a).

As such, the Chair of governors was being placed in a vital position in respect of the relationship with the Head Teacher in that the Chair would be in receipt of information about how well or not the Head Teacher was doing. Furthermore, he/she would also be aware of the 'targets of action' for the Head and the staff as a whole.

The significance of this development is further highlighted by the fact that such information was given only to the Chair of governors and not to the corporate body of the governors. Irrespective of whether or not the Chair of governors decided to act upon an appraisal statement, the point to make at this juncture is the incorporation, on a legal basis, of the role of the Chair of governors in the process of appraisal of the professional head of the organisation – yet another step in the role of the Chair taking on a pivotal role at the local level of school governance.



Healy (1994) has shown that, in reality, many Chairs of governors struggled with this new role and in many instances received the appraisal statement on the due process as arranged and no more was heard of it.

“The Chairs of governors were left with a document designed to be anodyne. They would get access to the text but how far could they get access to the sub-text? How far did they need or want to explore issues? Clearly only the Head Teacher could enable them to go beyond the document and into the process” (p 107).

### **1992 Schools Act**

The 1992 Schools Act established the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) and the inspection of schools system. It did not directly mention the role of the Chair of governors as distinct from any other significant person. What it did however, was to give yet another responsibility to school governing bodies which, as the years since 1993, (the year of implementation), have shown, has become central to the work of a governing body. As Deem et al (1995) state;

“There are three aspects to this, the first relates to the role of the governing body in the efficient and strategic management of the school, the second concerns the fulfilment of legal responsibilities and associated policy formation by governing bodies; the third concerns the discharge by governors of responsibilities in connection with the National Curriculum.” (p 161)

The Schools Act 1992 therefore, created a dilemma for school governing bodies. On the one hand, the monitoring role of the governing body was enhanced by the responsibilities placed upon them to ensure that the school is prepared for an OFSTED Inspection but more importantly, that the governing body fulfilled the statutory requirements of the post-inspection process of producing an Action Plan. On the other hand, the role of the governing body was itself subject to inspection largely under the “Management and Leadership” section of the Inspection Framework.

Reference to the Inspection Framework (1995) for Secondary Schools illustrates this point where, under Section 6.1 ‘Leadership and Management’ the guidance states;

“In essence the governing body has three main tasks; to provide a strategic view of where the school is heading; to act as a critical friend to the school; and to hold the school to account for the educational standards it achieves and the quality of education it provides”. (p 107)

The main sources of evidence to be used prior to the inspection would be the minutes of governing body meetings and pre-inspection discussions with the Head Teacher and governors. Furthermore, under 6.3 – ‘Efficiency of the School’ – the Inspectors

“should consider how the governing body is fulfilling its strategic responsibility to planning the use of resources” (p 123)

The evidence for such judgements were to be found from the same sources as at 6.1. The effect of such innovation in accountability and the raising of standards was to increase the pressure on Chairs of governing bodies to ensure, guided by their Head

Teachers, that the school was sufficiently prepared for an inspection and that they were geared up to implement an Action Plan.

The Chair of governors , as has been established, cannot act alone outside of the body of school governors, except on an urgent matter. Nevertheless, the pressure to ‘succeed’, to have a ‘good OFSTED’ meant that of all governors, the Chair was thrust into the limelight – not only in the need to liaise more closely with the Head Teacher over a potentially long period of time but also because the Chair was likely to be the first of the governing body (and in many instances, the sole representative) to be interviewed by the Inspection Team.

As Esp and Saran (1995) quote in their analysis of data from Chairs’ comments;

“We are making sure everything (policies) is in place. OFSTED means increased accountability for all, including governors” (p 38)

and as one Head Teacher commented;

“OFSTED is a good stick. Are you doing what you say you are doing?

The Chair is OFSTED trained. I’m looking forward to an ‘outside view. (p 39)

Therefore, through the formative process of emergence since 1986, the Chair of governors is increasingly in the forefront of decision making, consultation with agencies and regulation. One of the immediate, yet at the same time, disconcerting aspects of the role of the Chair of governors under the 1992 Schools Education Act is illustrated by Thody (1994).



“Crook Primary School, the recipient of the first ‘failing school’ report, received its copy ... only the day before publication ... Surprise and bitterness was expressed by Crook’s Governors.

“The Governors could not contain themselves when they read what was in the report. It just doesn’t add up ... it is dispiriting but we had some tremendous support”. (TES 10 December 1993)

This comment came from the Chair of governors.

The Schools Act 1992, therefore, altered the ‘climatic conditions’ set by ERA to include periods of ‘high pressure’ in the form of OFSTED Inspections. In this present research, in response to the question “What have been the positive aspects of your role as Chair over the last few years?, 20% of the Chairs of governors who responded from Sunshire LEA identified a successful OFSTED inspection. Indeed as one Chair of a controlled JMI school stated.

“Because of the strong team of governors we have, we do not have the problem of other schools. We had a brilliant OFSTED inspection; We now have a happy well balanced staff resulting in above average exam results. On the whole, the school is on a very even keel. Everyone is working in the right direction. This benefits staff, pupils and governors”

(Chair of governors Survey 43)

Another Chair of governors of a maintained primary school, who was herself a lay inspector, stated in response to the question, “How do you prepare for governing body meetings?” stated;

“We have some items that we always have on every agenda. We always discuss our OFSTED action plan ... health and safety ... and the school development plan and from now on targets will also be an item on the agenda”. (Chair of governors, Newshire, Interview 5)

Within a relatively short period of time, therefore, the influence of OFSTED inspections has permeated the whole educational system and the role of the Chair of governors has not escaped its influence. In addition to the Chair’s name appearing in the governors annual report as a result of the 1986 Education (No. 2 ) Act, the name of the Chair now appears on the published OFSTED Inspection report as a result of the Schools Act 1992.

### **1993 Education Act**

Part 1, Chapter 1, Section 1 of the 1993 Education Act sets the scene for a radical transformation in the relation of power in education.

“The Secretary of State shall promote the education of the people of England and Wales”.

Section 2, paragraph 2 went on to say;

“He (The Secretary of State) shall in the case of his powers to regulate the provision made in schools and institutions within the further education sector in England and Wales, exercise his powers with a view, among other things, to improving standards, encouraging diversity and increasing opportunities for choice”.

The elements of ‘choice and diversity’ as outlined in the Government White Paper 1992 had come home to roost. “The most radical changes in the control of education

were contained in the Education Act 1993” argues Sallis (1995) and indeed there was a radical shift to the centre in terms of the powers of the Secretary of State to determine action. The creation of a Funding Agency to the fast-tracking of Grant Maintained Schools Status, the creation of Education Associations to take over schools – all created an environment of significant pressure and indeed expectation.

Pressure came from the ever increasing requirements placed upon governing bodies . For instance, in Section 24, there was a duty of the governing body to consider whether to hold a ballot on grant-maintained status once in every school year. Furthermore, there was a requirement to report any decisions made by the governing body following such consideration and to explain if a ballot had not been undertaken, the reasons for such a decision.

The pressure was undoubtedly felt by governing bodies in their annual requirement to consider GM status. It was also felt in the interaction of Head Teacher and Chair of governors in balancing the various interests of the future of their school. Hustler et al (1995) in their interviews with Head Teachers drew out contrasting philosophies.

“I suggested applying for GM status just as the Bill was going through Parliament (1988 ERA). I had spoken to the DES secretly. LEA consultation meetings were a disgrace ... I produced most of the materials and basically led the GM move ... This brief picture does not touch upon the true picture and the threats from the LEA”. (Head Teacher of first mixed comprehensive school to go GM (p 49).

A contrasting view was given by a Head of a Girls Sixth Form Centre in Dunston.

“The day my Governors say yes to GM is the day I resign”.

(p 43).



Such contrasting views were mirrored undoubtedly up and down the country. The subsequent development of grant maintained status is now well known. The point to note is that, in the context of the new requirements of the 1993 Education Act, the previous Education Acts and regulations which put the role of Chair of governors in the centre stage (e.g. Annual Parents meeting, conduct of meetings, construction of agendas etc.), brought that role into sharp focus in the conduct of meetings required by the Act to consider GM status. Many Chairs of governors, morally, politically and philosophically, were undoubtedly ambivalent toward GM status. Others saw opportunities. Anderson and Bush (1998), in their survey of Head Teacher and Chairs of governing bodies of GM schools in relation to standards, acknowledged that both Head Teachers and Chairs were known to play key roles in advocating opted out status for their schools.

“Indeed, the impression they sometimes create is that opting out is ‘good’ by definition and that any alleged shortcomings in its implementation are either illusory or short lived”. (p24)

Nevertheless, the role of the Chair was pivotal in terms of accountability, As Farrell and Law (1998) reported in their analysis of the accountability of governing bodies;

“None of the governors interviewed could recall any governor not being re-elected or any co-opted governor being removed from office. The only case of a removal from office was where the Chair was deselected because he had been one of the main instigators of a failed route to GM status”. (p11)

Accountability came with a vengeance . The delicate road on which Chairs travelled on the GM move was illustrated by the case of a Stratford School, Newham.

The events have been chronicled elsewhere (e.g. Feintuck 1994) and it is suffice to exemplify the delicate role of the Chair by reference to the resignation of two Chairs of governors within a period of five months in a very turbulent period in the early history of the GM story.

Whilst the issues of the Funding Agency and fast track routes to GM status may have been the main structural elements of the 1993 Education Act, the introduction of a Special Needs Code of Practice had an equally significant, though less overt, impact on the educational system. The role of the Chair was once again enhanced within these provisions of the act.

In the 1993 Education Act, governing bodies were placed, side by side with the LEA, with a duty to have regard to the provisions of a Code of Practice which introduced a hierarchical 5 step procedure for dealing with pupils identified as having ‘special needs’. Under Section 161 the governing body had the duty;

“to secure that, where the responsible person has been informed by the local education authority that a registered pupil has special educational needs, these needs are made known to all who are likely to teach him”

(Section 161 (1) (b))

For the purpose of this Act and the Code of Practice, a ‘responsible person’ was defined as;

“The Head Teacher or the appropriate governor (that is the chairman of the governing body, and where the governing body have designated another

governor for the purposes of this paragraph, that other governor).

### Section 161 (2) (a)

Under this section of the Act, therefore, the Chair of governors is mentioned with the Head Teacher as an equal in terms of 'responsible person' for the purposes of the Code of Practice. In doing so, there is a rare recognition in an Act of Parliament of such a potentially significant role for the Chair of governors. In reality, it was more the case that Head Teachers become "responsible person' for all sorts of practical reasons. Such reality however, does not undermine the enhanced status of the Chair of governors as recognised in law.

### The Education Act 1996

For all intent and purposes, the 1996 Education Act was a 'consolidating Act'. It passed into law on the 24 July 1996 as

"An act to consolidate the Education Act 1944 and contains other enactments relating to Education with amendments to give effect to recommendation of the Law commission".

The Act, in terms of its physical bulk and its range, far outranked other Education Acts yet it brought little that was new. In large, it reaffirmed, in one large document, previous amended legislation. In terms of school governance, it introduced the concept of an incorporated governing body but in essence, repeated the elements of previous Acts with the occasional subtle difference.

This 'consolidation' Act, it could be argued, reflected the Government's own view as to how to consolidate its own power – by impinging on most aspects of school life.



The move to incorporation was detailed in Schedule 7 of the 1996 Act where once again the role of the Chair of governors was examined briefly.

Section 1 (2) stated that

“The application of the seal of any such governing body must be authenticated by the signature

(a) of the chair of the governing body or

(b) of some other member authorised.

together with a signature of any other member.’

The 1996 Education Act is, therefore, an encapsulation of a whole range of previous legislation and with it, by default almost, confirming the growing significance of the role of the Chair of the governing body.

If we were to look to evidence of this outside of the statutes of Parliament, it would be within other areas of communication emanating from the Department for Education and Employment.

The 1996 Education Act, for some of the New Right, marked the low point, if not the beginning of a formal demise, of the role of the Local Education Authority.

Chapter II entitled ‘Ancillary Functions in the LEA’ listed a range of fairly inconsequential duties left to the LEA. In addition to the chronicling of the apparent demise was the growing practice of the DfEE to communicate directly to Chairs of governors. This was done by including them on the circulation list of consultation documents and letters of explanation as well as writing directly to Chairs of governors as a body in their own right thereby circumventing the ‘closed’ shop of the LEA.

Several examples illustrate this point. In a letter of the 13 September 1996, the Head of the Schools Governance Division wrote directly to all Chairs of Governing Bodies of all LEA Maintained and Grant Maintained Schools enclosing a welcoming letter from the Secretary of State, Gillian Shepherd, to all new governors. The DfEE was using the Chair of governors in a crucially important role recognising the importance of new governors and involving them in a process of direct communications. An enclosed Annex A “Important aspects of Duty as School Governors” included under the heading “Assistance to Governors” the following statement.

“The Chairman has an important role to play in ensuring the smooth induction of new governors on to the governing body”.

The fact that this was true was common sense. The fact that it is recognised and stated in a direct letter and annex to Chairs of governing bodies was recognition on a different dimension.

A DfEE letter of the 17 September 1996 to Chief Education Officers in England and Wales and to Chairs and Head Teachers of Grant Maintained Schools on the subject of ‘Jobseekers Allowances : Free School Meals and Milk and the remission of fees and charges’ is a further example of this approval beyond the norm of previous experience.

The DfEE letter of the 1 October 1996 on the “School Curriculum : completing Key Stage 4 requirements early” was sent to Heads and Chairs of governors of secondary schools and all special schools with secondary age pupils among their parties.

By January 1998, the Secretary of State (David Blunkett) was writing personally and directly to “Chairman of governors of all maintained schools in England and Wales” on the School Teachers’ Pay and Conditions of Employment document.

In this letter he states;

“I propose to accept the following recommendations of the Review Body and implement with effect from 1 September 1998

(b) That the statutory professional duties of Head Teacher should include

Under “Management of Staff” a duty to

(i) report to the Chair of governors annually on the professional development of all teachers, at all standards of performance.”

In paragraph 11 of that letter, David Blunkett continues

“I should like to reiterate the thanks of myself and other Ministers for the enormous strides that are being taken in the education service and the part you and your school’s staff are playing in delivering the Government’s central objectives of raising standards and offering opportunity to all our children”

Paragraph 13 states simply

“I have written in similar terms to your Head Teacher”.

This development of recognising the centrality of the role of the Chair of governors therefore took on another dimension once the personal direct letter of communication was established. The DfEE did it almost unilaterally. All of a sudden, Chairs of governing bodies around the country found themselves with a steady stream of weighty documents arriving though their post or via the school. The Head Teachers were often placed in a difficult position of having to hand correspondence to Chairs from the DfEE without knowing what it contained.

This change was reflected in this present study in evidence gained from the survey of Chairs of governors. To one question, “How has the role of the Chair changed in



recent years in relation to the DfEE?" there was an interesting range of responses, from a cynical "who?" through "masses of paperwork " to "better consultation" . Through all the responses there was a definite feeling of Chairs that it is a one way flow of information from the DfEE.

"They hand you out information and expect you to get on with it without support". (Foundation Chair of an aided JMI School – 15 NT)

"They appear to be using a more friendly approach while piling on more responsibility". (Co-opted Chair of a JMI School 25S)

"There is a vast amount of paper – which is not always helpful (Co-opted Chair of a High School 30S)

Recent pronouncements from the DfEE and Ministers in reducing bureaucracy in schools have addressed such observations and since 1997 there has been a much more structured approach to the sending of relevant documentation in suitable formats. Nevertheless, Chairs in this study did acknowledge that they were now on the receiving end of information in a way that they had never been previously.

The move to establish a more 'direct line' between the DfEE and Chairs of governing bodies by direct mailing was reinforced by the publication of the DfEE booklet "Guidance on Good Governance" (DfEE 1996). This guidance was produced in agreement with the school governor and head teacher associations and it was aimed at assisting the development of close working partnership between head teachers and governors.

In the section, "Who does what", three key points are identified – the Chair, the Head Teacher and the Clerk. Within the functions of the Chair were included the following:

- ensuring that the business of the governing body is conducted properly and in accordance with legal requirements.
- ensuring that meetings are run efficiently, focusing on priorities and making best use of the time available.
- ensuring that all members have equal opportunities to participate fully in discussions and decision making.
- encouraging all members of the governing body to work together as a team.
- liaising with the Head Teacher.
- acting in cases which may properly be deemed 'urgent'.
- making public statements on behalf of the governing body, where delegated to do so (p10).

“Guidance on Good Governance” was the first document of its kind – an agreed set of working practices/definitions between the main players – to be used as a guide to good practice and given the official sanction of the DfEE. The functions identified for the Chair were therefore placed central to good governance in a way never officially defined and agreed as such before.

### **School Standards and Framework Act 1998**

Within the confines of the period of this study, it is too early to determine the implications of the Standards and Framework Act for the role of school governance and the role of the Chair of governors. What can be said is that the Act sets out, yet

again, a new agenda, which has at its heart, the raising of standards of pupils achievement. In this agenda, accountability is taken to new levels.

LEAs' are accountable through development plans, extended schemes of delegation, school organisation committees, parental representation on education committees and the creation of Education Action Zones. Schools are accountable through the potential intervention of the LEA to intervene in schools causing concern and the setting of external targets for attendance, numeracy and literacy. Both LEAs' and schools are accountable to each other through a Code of Practice yet to be truly tested.

Implicit in this new accountability is the role of the governing body and Chapter III of the 1998 Act as well as Schedules 9 – 12 outline the new arrangements for the constitution of governing bodies. As such it is the most significant step in school governance since the 1986 Education (No. 2) Act.

Whilst such provisions of the 1998 Act largely reaffirm previous Acts with some adjustments to the composition of governing bodies and the need to determine a new instrument, the one significant change with regard to the role of the Chair lies in Schedule 16 Section 23 where a new requirement on the LEA in respect of the Head Teacher is introduced.

The section reads;

- 23 (I) Where the authority have any serious concerns about the performance of the Head Teacher of the school –
- (a) they shall make a written report of their concerns to the Chair of the governing body at the same time sending a copy to the Head Teacher and



- (b) the Chair of the governing body shall notify the authority in writing of the action which he proposes to take in the light of the of the report.

It would seem therefore that from this provision in the Act, the accountability of the Head Teacher to the governing body is not only reaffirmed but taken one stage further in that the Chair of governors is charged with the task of determining what action, if any, is going to be taken in the light of a report from the LEA.

The importance of the role of the Chair of governors and his/her relationship with the Head Teacher becomes central to the leadership/management issues of school development.

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of this chapter has been to demonstrate by reference to a close examination of the education legislation, Circulars, Statutory Instruments and official letters as well as by reference to other studies, that from “humble beginnings” in the aftermath of the 1977 Taylor Report right up to the 1998 Standards and Framework Act, there has been an increase in the powers and position of the Chair of governors. It is the view of the author that this has not been a planned incremental growth but, quite the opposite, it has been a result of a series of initiatives in legislation, not necessarily linked to the previous, which, by increasing the role and responsibilities of school governors in general, have pushed the role of the Chair of governors in particular into a pivotal role in the effectiveness of governing bodies and school development. By regulation and the creation of an educational climate which changes with each piece of legislation, the Chair of governors has amassed a substantial range of direct and indirect powers which together constitute a potentially formidable arsenal if they were to be used.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR A STUDY OF THE ROLE OF THE CHAIR OF GOVERNORS**

#### **Introduction**

The study of the role of a Chair of governors cannot be undertaken without some reference to a theoretical framework – to some kind of context in which the study can be placed. This chapter aims to outline the main approaches to date in the study of school governance, some of which have direct relevance to the role of the Chair of governors.

#### **Developing a conceptual framework**

Ball (1990) establishes a case for ‘policy matters’. He presents his analysis of the complexity of the total social system by reference to the political, the ideological and the economic (p9). The elements of the complexity can be considered both in relation to one another and separately.

As Ball states;

“Such a framework leads to a dynamic consideration of education policy in relation to the political and ideological and economic and political, ideological and economic in education policy”. (p 9)

He goes on to argue that the theoretical strategy appropriate to analysis at each level will differ; structural in the case of the economic, realist or interventionist in the case of the political and discourse in the case of the ideological. Each level is a source and a resource for education policy making, provides its own vocabulary or discourse and has effects in its own terms on the nature and possibility of policy.

Within this framework Ball considered three possibilities in his study. Firstly, the idea that change can be accounted for in terms of the formal and administrative process of policy making and the struggles and contests between interest groups and

parties engaged in the policy process. Secondly, Ball explores the notion of 'correspondence' between 'education and the economy'.

"The reality of fiscal crises, changed strategies of accommodation and mode of production and concomitant changes in the mode of regulation and the role of the state are not in question but their effect on the field of education cannot just be read off (as many writers want to do)" (p 16-17).

Thirdly, Ball explores the role of discourses, which are about what can be said and thought but also about who can speak, when, where and with what authority.

Discourses embody meaning and social relationships; they constitute both subjectivity and power relations (Ball p 17).

In terms of Ball's framework and analysis, it is the autonomy of the 'political' which sets the context for this study. In Ball's words;

"The investigation of the political leads to a consideration of the forms of governance of education in the politics of education – and the changing role and nature of influential groups and constituencies in the policy process, including the education state". (p 10)

Ball, in this context, was writing of the 'political' at the macro-level- national state policy and national notions of forms of governance – but this concept can also be used at the micro-level, that of the governing body, that of the Chairman of governors.

In a review of the work of Ball, White and Crump (1993) discuss the relationship of the macro to the micro perspectives in Ball's work in relation to his concept of 'space'.

"His ethnographies carry several examples where 'spaces' are actively sought at the micro-level to enhance the relevance of the document to that setting and Ball emphasises that 'discontinuities, compromises, omissions and exceptions are ..... important (1990 p 3) p 426.



They go on to state;

“Spaces in policies such as ERA and the NC arise from contradictory forms of management at the micro-level of institutions. While policies may project images of an ideal society, Ball and Bowe (1990) are able to indicate that the reality of policy implementation after its micro interpretation is indeed another form of that same policy. The knowledge used to produce the ‘real world’ policy is a considerable portion of the micro-political scenario and its interaction with the macro-environment”. (p426)

White and Crump go on to argue that education institutions are clearly multi-interest micro-level organisations. The ‘internal conflicts’ often mediate the projects of politicians and policy makers.

“It would seem reasonable enough, therefore, to say that real ‘power’ lies not with any one person or group, but rather there are various points of power potentially, with all persons and all groups” (White and Crump p 427).

Within the adaptation of the ‘autonomous’ political level of analysis, the first of Ball’s three perspectives - the formal and administrative processes of policy making – is one that is relevant to this study. In addition, the adaptation of the ‘spaces’ concept as stated in White and Crump can provide a useful extra insight into one of the ‘points of power’ – that of the Chair of governors – at the micro level. That is to say, the legislation and regulatory provision since 1986 has provided the framework but within the framework, the room for discretionary application, the different processes adapted in each ‘micro’ institution and the ‘knowledge base’ accessed by each micro institution, has differed widely. This has allowed for ‘space’ to develop between the ‘macro’ level of intention and the ‘micro’ level of application.

Ball (1994) in following up his work on educational policy making and practice (1990) analyses policy as ‘text and discourse’. In discussing ‘policy as text’, Ball argues that policies have their own momentum inside the state; purposes and intention

are reworked and reorientated over time. Policies are represented differently by different authors e.g the succession of ‘Secretaries of State for Education’. There are ‘interpretations of interpretations’.

“... these attempts to represent or re-represent policy sediment and build up over time; they spread confusion and allow for play in and the playing off of meanings. Gaps and spaces for action and response are opened up or reopened as a result. Thus, the physical text that pops through the school letter box, or wherever, does not arrive ‘out of the blue’ – it has an interpretational and representational history – and neither does it enter a social or institutional vacuum. The text and its readers and the context of response all have listeners. Policies enter existing patterns of inequality e.g. the structure of local markets, local class relations. They ‘impact’ and are taken up differently as a result”. (p 17)

There is a certain seductive element in Ball’s position for a number of reasons. Firstly, there is a simple logic to it. There is a common-sense view that states that there is likely to be a ‘difference’, ‘gap’, ‘misinterpretation’ between the intentions of the policy makers and the action of the ‘policy implementation’ at whatever level. Secondly, as an officer of a Local Education Authority engaged in the receipt of reading and the offering of advice on ‘the physical texts that pop through the letterbox’, the author recognises the ‘interpretational and representational’ perspective as argued by Ball. Statutory Instruments which enact the provisions of a particular Act flow with regularity from central to local government and in their drafting leave little room for interpretation. Circulars and letters from the central department however, in this instance the Department for Education and Employment, offer ‘guidance’ - guidance often with a ‘heavy hand’ – but which remains guidance only, with the caveat that it can be tested in a court of law.

Thirdly, it is important to recognise the practical reality of almost 25,000 school governing bodies implementing policies reflecting the main and often phased aspects of a particular piece of legislation, with the same level of understanding and within the same timescale. This is especially so when such factors as the clerking facilities to governing bodies, the pro-active/not so active LEA's, DfEE communication channels and the relationships between Head Teacher and Chair of governors, are so variable across the country. It is not surprising that there may exist a difference in interpretation, or even a gap in the non-implementation of a policy initiative, between a senior DfEE official responsible for drafting a particular measure and the governor of a small primary school in an urban area.

### **The context of time in relation to a conceptual framework**

Nevertheless, however seductive Ball's argument may be, it cannot be accepted uncritically. Ball (1990) was writing in the immediate aftermath of the 1988 Education Reform Act and Ball (1994) was writing in the immediate aftermath of 'Choice and Diversity' (DES 1992). The perspectives of Ball (1994) were, as a critical policy analyst, a post-structuralist and a critical ethnographer in an exercise of applied sociology.

As such, his views were critical of the 'dominant market orientated philosophy' of the time which minimalised the 'professional' roles in education and maximised the quasi-education, consumer perspective. He was commenting upon a fundamental reaction to the 'clientist' system of a previous era (Ball 1990 p11). This intellectual exercise was correct. Each 'age' must critically reflect.

Yet, on assessing educational development post 1997 with the change of government for the first time in eighteen years, time for further reflection is needed.

Angus (1994), in his critique of Caldwell and Spinks 'The Self Managing School' as a text worthy of sociological analysis, argues that a shift in emphasis and therefore perspective, is required.



“It seems likely, however, that given the shift to the right and the reduction of education to the service of the market, the economy and national interest, the priority given to schooling in the past as a public good will need to be reasserted. From the emerging new right perspective, the citizen as individual is sovereign, with freedom from interference of others in the pursuit of individual interest, ..... Within an alternative view, one which emphasises social democracy, citizens may be seen as active social and political beings, whose individual existence merges into membership of a collectivity which brings with it rights and responsibilities of participation – including participation in school governance – in the general interests of members”.

(p89)

Since 1997, it appears that there is a greater emphasis upon co-operation than upon competition ( witness School Organisation Committees), standards rather than structures (witness the creation of the Standards and Effectiveness Unit and the demise of the G.M. influence) and on communities rather than on individuals (witness the Early Years Child Care Strategy). In such a climate, would Ball's critical analysis be different? Ball's work (1990, 1994) reflected a critical analysis of the 'new right' era. New Labour's accession to power has changed the agenda. Observations based on research need to be seen in the light of the changed governmental environment.

It is worthy to note at this point Fullan's (1991) discussion on the areas of educational change, when he acknowledges Gibson's, categorisation of innovation into first order changes and second order changes. First order changes are those that improve the efficiency and effectiveness of what is currently done 'without disturbing the

organisation features, without substantially altering the way that children and adults perform their roles. Second order changes seek to alter the fundamental way in which organisations are put together including new goals, structures and roles.

“The challenge of the 1990’s will be to deal with more second-order changes - changes that affect the culture and structure of schools, restructuring roles and reorganising responsibilities, including those of students and parents”. (p 29)

The 1990’s has indeed seen second-order changes both in the aftermath of the 1988 ERA and in legislation passed in the ten years since. Indeed, second-order changes have come thick and fast, culturally, structurally and organisationally. It is within the second order changes – from local management of schools, through to GM status, to refined LMS schemes, National Curriculum , a change of government and new initiatives such as the Literacy and Numeracy hours , Education Action Zones etc that the role of the Chair of governors has come to the fore as an integral player in the interplay of influences.

Ball (1994) recognises as such in his analysis of ‘New headship and school leadership’;

‘Given the new ‘powers’ of governors, the working relationship between the head teacher and the Chair of governors is crucial in the achievement and maintenance of a line of demarcation between governance and management. The specificity of this relationship is a key point of focus for future research.’(p92)

### **The context of power in relation to a conceptual framework**

This perspective is also shared by Deem (1994) in ‘Researching the locally powerful - a study of School Governance’. Deem states;

“Within the context of the governing bodies themselves, a fourth set of



power relations also made itself known to us. This included those who were prominent in the activities of the governing body by virtue of their frequent and sustained participation or their occupation of a key office. Head Teachers, chairs of governing bodies, chairs of finance committees and representatives of the LEA were likely to fall within this subset". (p 155)

In focussing upon the role of the Chair of governors in the context of the 'locally powerful' concept, we can refer to Deem (1995) once again. In their study of 'Active Citizenship and the Governing of Schools', Deem et al followed the fortunes of fifteen, then ten, governing bodies during the period 1988-1993. It was therefore a longitudinal, multi-methods, multi site case study, with six aims; firstly, to monitor and gather new information about the impact of new legislation on school governance; secondly, to examine the power relations in the school governance process; thirdly to examine the decision making process in governing bodies through the dynamics of membership; fourthly, to examine the organisational features of governing bodies; fifthly, to examine the relationships between education and industry from the standpoint of the business governor and finally, an examination of the relationships between a governing body and the LEA.

The authors developed a three fold categorisation of distinct perspectives on governing bodies which overlapped: - the political science, participating democracy and new managerialist perspectives. They concluded that the 'political science' perspective – that because no interest dominates, all interests may equally be represented – was not tenable due to the fact that the professional interest will always dominate. The perspective of participating democracy was one which also presented problems of acceptance in that, given the inbuilt predominance of the 'professional' interest and the wide range of statutory duties and responsibilities, it was difficult for governors to enter into a genuine dialogue. With regard to the third perspective, that of new managerialism;



“It is caught in a contradiction between efficiency and the democratic process which may not necessarily be the most efficient way to achieve desired ends”  
(p 87)

If ‘new managerialism’ is the perspective least discountable in terms of interpreting a new role, then, in terms of organisational structure, the authors concluded that governing bodies, at the time of writing, were between two broad trends; that of the traditional model of democratic and bureaucratic culture and that of this new quasi-market, consumerist, new managerialistic culture which is fundamentally critical of the public service ethos and traditional education professional ethos. The devolution of new duties to site based management, the responsibilities for resources, both ‘allocative’ and ‘authorative’ (Giddens 1984 p 85), the organisational sub division of the governing body into committees, were all on-going challenges to governing bodies which the authors observed, yet could not determine a clear direction from their observations or evidence.

It is in their discussion on the power relations within the governing body and school as a whole, however, that this study has particular relevance to the present study.

Addressing different expositions of power from Lukes’ ‘three dimensional’ theory to Clegg’s ‘episodic systematic and social circuits’ classifications to see their relevance to school governance, Deem et al concluded that, whilst giving limited insight, such expositions did not fit neatly or fully explain the evanescent quality of governing bodies.

“... the failure of policy texts and popular discourses to capture the complexities of relations of power, specify the meaning of governor empowerment and identify the agencies which are to empower new lay governors, will combine with other organisational barriers to ensure that relations of power in the governance of schools, while undoubtedly still fragile and diffuse, have not enabled many newly active

citizens to move from formal to substantive realisation of their citizen potential in the area of education” (p 155)

If there was one exception to this, it would be in the role of the Chair of the governing body.

“Heads and Chairs are key movers in the governance of schools. It was they who showed most awareness of multi-dimensional power and careful analysis of our field notes made while observing meetings confirmed our impressions gained that the individuals holding these offices shaped much of what was happening on governing bodies both in connection with allocative and authorative resources and in relation to decision making and agenda setting”.  
(p 142)

### **Positioning the role of the Chair**

Whilst it is the relationship between Head Teacher and Chair which Deem et al allude to and the potential for positive-negative relationships, the fact that the Chair of governors has been singled out as a ‘key mover’ is a significant observation. Whether this was down to personalities of the Chairs’ in that particular study or whether it was growth in the actual role of Chair through the series of regulations passed is not discussed. Nevertheless, the Chair of governors emerges as a key figure in this ‘power play’ within school governance which is supported by other research.

Kogan (1984) et al referred to this in their study of eight governing bodies in 1982 which reflected, in Kogan’s terms, the political science’ perspective in which ‘government’ is portrayed as ‘ a series of different groups which impact upon each other and therefore form relationships’ (p 241)



It is interesting to note that, at the time of their research, 1982, the first effects of the 1980 Education Act were being felt in terms of regulations being implemented. In this environment, Kogan et al, recognised the significant role of the Chair.

“..The role of the chairman was a key one, providing opportunities both for symbolic representation of the governing body between meetings and for considerable influence over the style and emphasis of meeting activity’(p 102)

Informing this recognition was a categorisation of ‘types of chairman’ from their research; the ‘education committee member chairman’, the ‘consensual chairman’, the ‘radical chairmen’ and the ‘single handed chairmen’. Such “labels indicate the ‘heart of the role’”. (p 107)

The ‘education committee chairman’ views the governing body as an outpost of the political –administrative system and is conscientious in terms of keeping fellow governors in touch with the wider world of local authority political decisions and process yet sufficiently astute as not to favour his or her governing body before the interests of others.

The ‘consensual chairman’ sees the governing body as a ‘collective’ and involves all governors. The ‘radical chairman’ challenges the stereotype, questions the ‘status quo’ and encourages governors to explore their own potentialities. The ‘single handed’ Chairman’ works assiduously between meetings to ‘keep the work of the governing body ongoing’, yet as Kogan et al noted;

“...governing bodies do not normally given open and formal consideration to the qualities and capacity desirable in a chairman .... Yet this appointment can make a considerable difference to the position of the governing body in the checks and balances created for it by the professional and political field of force” (p 107)



The categorisation of Kogan et al is useful in reflecting upon the role of the Chair of governors a decade and a half on. The 'education committee member chairman', whilst still there, is no longer the dominant category it once was. In the author's own LEA for example, whilst 'LEA Chairs were the largest single category – 30 out of 64 – of the 30, 22 were elected members. In other words only one third of Chairs of governing bodies were 'education committee member chairmen'.

The 'radical chairman' is a further category which needs 'contextualising' in the light of legislation passed since 1986. The 'incorporation' of governing bodies as a result of the 1996 Education Act limited the liability of individual members of the governing body but also limited individual actions. Whilst the Chair still has power to act in 'urgent matters', steps were taken to define 'urgent' as to limit the potential for a 'radical' chairman to act outside the agreed policies of the full governing body.

The 'consensual' and 'single handed' Chairs still have some resonance today as recognisable 'types' in that attempting to achieve a consensus is still an operational aim of many Chairs whilst working single handedly between meetings is still a characteristic of many Chairs as found in the present study.

As Esp and Saran (1995) state in relation to one case study in their research.

"The chair work through consensus. 'There is an art in carrying the rest of the governors with you'. The head and chair do not always agree. The chair's role is conciliatory with consensus building.'

(Case Study A p 51)

Since Kogan's work on school governing bodies, a number of studies have researched the role of the governing body (Thody 1994, Earley 1994, Deem et al 1995, Scanlon 1999) which have involved, at some stage, observations on the role of the Chair of governors. Studies in school leadership (Grace 1995, Hustler 1995) have also through the perceptions of Head Teachers, used information gleaned from Chairs of

governors. Some studies, however, have included the role of the Chair of governors as a crucial element in their studies of school governance.

Esp and Saran (1995) focused upon the roles of Chairs of governors and Head Teachers and on the developing relationships between them in the management of their schools. Their enquiry was based upon the assumption that the two key actors (Chair and Head) were playing central roles in the implementation of the many changes required by the legislation enacted in the late 1980's and early 1990's. Their research involved the Chairs of governing bodies and Head Teachers of 21 schools who were interviewed at different times using a semi-structured interview approach yet "sufficiently open-ended to allow the respondent to expand on issues of special interest". (p 24)

Their findings tended to confirm their initial view that the relationship between the Head Teacher and the Chair is crucial to the effectiveness of the governing body.

"It was when Chairs and Heads talked about their joint roles that a number of common themes emerged. These provide a powerful indication of the importance of an effective partnership between the Head and the Chair' if staff and governors are to contribute positively to school effectiveness. The comment on the need for mutual respect and trust, the value of a critical friend and a shared vision for the school, indicate that attention needs to be given to the 'match' of Head and Chair in the partnership. Personalities and their respective strengths and interpersonal skills have a considerable impact on the development of effective staff and governor involvement in School Management." (p 71)

This 'partnership' needs to have a shared vision, be sufficiently aware of the fragile nature of good relationships, be able to share tasks, and to be aware of the processes involved in managing change.

The views of the Head Teachers and the Chair of governors, given that they were interviewed separately, give an impression of a 'meeting of minds' on the key issues. There appears to be little real difference of opinion except in a few examples given where a breakdown in relationships between Head Teacher and Chair led to real difficulties. In general each was mutually supportive of the other.

“Heads saw the chair as leader of the governing body. Some saw the role as more than just managing meetings or settling policies and frameworks for the school.

The Chair was said to 'set the tone of relationships with the governing body' and to exercise a 'leadership role complementing to that of the head'. (p 71)

Esp and Saran's empirical evidence is supplemented by commentaries from other education participants, including Head Teachers, Chairs of governors and educational commentators.

In partial contrast to this 'accommodation of minds' is Grace's (1995) study of School Leadership. Grace's research data appears to be gathered at a slightly earlier date in the 1990's than Esp and Saran's, but the time difference is possibly down to one year. Even so, the first three years of the 1990's were highly significant in the pace of delegation to schools under the Local Management of Schools schemes, bringing to the fore the changes in educational environments which gave rise to potential tensions in relationships between the main players in the field, Head Teachers, governing bodies and LEAs.

Therefore, the questions asked of Head Teachers in 1992-93 may elicit a slightly different response from those asked in 1994 at the time of Esp and Saran's study. Moreover, Grace's study was one directed solely at the role of the Head Teacher and his or her role in school leadership. The participants knew of this and many have responded in the 'professionals alike' manner. In other words, the response that



Grace received was the professional voice commentating upon professional and lay governance issues. In Esp and Saran's study, the focus was upon the 'key players' as defined by the 'professional Head Teacher' and the 'lay Chair of governors'. Both parties knew of the perspective of the research. Both parties came from the same school.

Grace's study illustrates a much sharper edge to the role of governors and indirectly to the role of the Chair.

"The Head Teachers participating in this inquiry had been asked to describe their working relations with their governing bodies following the empowering legislation of the 1980's. Close examination of the Head Teachers' accounts and of Head Teacher discourse revealed that the majority of them had not experienced, at that time, any sense of changed power relations with governors. The reaction of these Head Teachers may be summed up as saying in effect, despite the government's intention to empower the governors, Head Teacher leadership remains in practice. In short, these Head Teachers were confident that they were 'still in charge' (p 77)

Grace alludes to the concept of a 'good governor', from the Head Teacher perspective, as one that gave no trouble.

"The governing body are very good, they have never disagreed with me up to this point in time". (Female Infant School Head p 51)

"We have never had any major confrontations ... They leave the business of running the school to me entirely. When I want their help, it is there, but they don't interfere. I have probably got more power than I really need or want'.

(Male secondary Head p 61)

Grace also observed however that;

“Power relations could be affected by the social, political and cultural composition of the school governors and by the relative activism and attitudes of the Chair of the governing body in particular”. (p 79)

For most Head Teachers’ in Grace’s study, the key issue was, in particular, whether or not harmonious working relations could be established with the Chair of the governing body, seen as a strategic power holder. For most Head Teachers, a form of compliance with the new arrangements was also a fact to be recognised but one which had to be watched with caution. ‘The historical forms of strong Head Teacher leadership were not be easily transformed. (p 90).

It could be argued that, on those occasions when Head Teachers are interviewed, surveyed or questioned as a discrete body on issues to do with their role and how they see their relationships with others, there is less recognition of the ‘duality of role’ with the Chair of governors of the governing body. The ‘sharp edge’ of Grace’s study, as opposed to the ‘accommodation of minds’ of Esp and Saran’s is given some credence by the contributions to ‘Heeding Heads’ (1995) in which a number of Head Teachers are interviewed and then the interviews are discussed by educational commentators and researchers. Rudduck (1995) in discussing the question ‘Head Teachers and Ownership – Whose School is it anyway?’ identifies three considerations. Firstly, the importance of politically informed perspectives and the power that they bring; the second concerns continuity and change and the third is about the balance of power between the Head and ‘significant others’. One category of ‘significant others’ was the governing body.

“Most heads feel confident in relation to their governors. Indeed, because of the relative inexperience of national issues or the protocols of working as a committee, governors may rely quite heavily on Heads for guidance. One Head said that she had to take her governors by the hand and lead them

through the agenda ... There was little evidence ... that governing bodies had in fact captured the 'ownership' of the school even though they offered valuable support' (p 190)

Generally however, in the contribution to 'Heeding Heads', relationships with governors were perceived as positive, although in some cases it came specifically from working with their Chair and/or Vice Chair whilst, in other cases, it was with the whole range of the governing body.

Ball (1994) also address the concept of 'significant others' in his analysis of 'New headship and school leadership'. One element of the 'significant others' is the governing body. Ball argues that the policy framework will articulate particular leadership roles and responsibilities and exclude others. Within the policy framework of the 1986 Education Act and the 1988 Education Reforms Acts, Ball identifies four aspects which have compacted upon 'new headship'.

Firstly, the formal powers of governance in schools now rests with the governing body and secondly, with the implementation of LMS, Heads exercise day to day control of virement over the school budget, within the delegation set by the governing body. Thirdly, the Heads are new 'de facto' employers of teachers given the Head Teacher/governor control over all financial related matters. Finally, Head Teachers are now in a market driven, client/consumer relationship with the 'client body' of their school – the parents.

Such changes alter the role of the Head Teacher and by association his or her role with the governing body. How this role is changed in terms of 'new headship' is the challenge set by and accepted by Ball and in endorsing such changes, he acknowledges that there are still uncertainties which surround school governance. He identifies three 'issues' which contribute to this uncertainty. Firstly 'the professional discourse' of headship as a hark back to previous historical/educational



commentators. Secondly, the ‘business or entrepreneurial discourse’ related to the proposed influence of the ‘business’ governors who, by their experience and awareness can lend a hand to the management issues of school governance. Thirdly the ‘empowerment of community discourse’ ranging in forms from community accountability to community partnership. Ball uses two contrasting quotes, one from a Chair of governors and one from a Head Teacher to illustrate the potential tension between the ‘community’ and the ‘professional’ discourse.

“The policy changes of the school ought not to be that frequent, as they are at the moment, and I think that’s a bit confusing. But you would expect there to be genuine partnership, if you like, between community, parent community and professionals so that you arrive at an understandable proposition of what you are going to try to do and why you’re going to try to do it, and I think that’s the most underweighted part at the moment, because there is no history’.

(Chair of governors)

“I literally do use them quite substantially and get them very busy and organised into doing the sort of things that are proper for governors to do, which leaves them far less time to come and do other things, which is fair enough.” (Head Teacher).

As Ball comments

“There is a terrain of uncertainty to be negotiated. The locus of control is ill defined “ (p 90)

Ball sees the terrain in terms of the ‘professional’ decisions being countered by the business discourse as well as the community discourse which is, in itself, counter to the business discourse. The paradox of these inter-relationships is illustrated by reference to Thomas (1993).

“It is an irony of a reform which places such options upon individual interest

that much of its successful management may well depend upon governors being altruistic and Head Teachers being committed to issues which cherish community participation in social institutions. (Ball p 92).

The irony continues. Since Ball's work, the educational landscape in terms of legislation has changed again. The commitment to 'education, education, education' has led to a re-emergence of 'partnership' values as opposed to 'market' values, to the resurrection of 'co-operation' instead of 'open competition'. Yet, the very ingredients of the Standards and Framework Act 1998 have potential to create even greater tension between Ball's 'discourses'. The restructuring of pay and conditions for teachers, the reintroduction of school teacher appraisal and the linking of this to performance targets, linked to pay; the literacy and numeracy targets set for each school while at the same time setting targets for a reduction in school exclusions and absence levels – all present new areas of potential conflict between Head Teachers and governing bodies especially if the governing body is to be held more to account for ineffective performance.

However, these areas of 'potential conflict' only exist if the 'locus of control' remains ill-defined. If the real power remains with the Head Teacher and accompanied accommodations of 'governor power' are made, then 'conflict' becomes 'accommodation'.

As Ball (1994) concludes

"The role of governors is equally an obfuscation rather than a matter of real change. The new responsibility of governors and the election of parent representatives allow the state to argue that, together with choice, there is a significant degree of parent empowerment and an increase in their influence

over school policies. In practice, change is superficial ... Head Teachers work hard to ensure that this is the way that things stay. Governance is thereby rendered into an materialistic and symbolic but potentially amiable process.

(p 101)

Once again, it is tempting to accept the logic of Ball's argument uncritically. The hegemonic effect of the Head Teacher's influence over the governing body is an interpretation with some plausibility. Indeed, the work of Shearn et al (1995) illustrates a very similar position.

In their study of school governor responsibility in 24 schools, the Head Teacher, Chair of governors and a Head of Department were interviewed. The period of this research was largely in 1991 with observations from ongoing research at the time of the article's publication. The authors stated that the empirical work which was undertaken suggested that one of the keys to understanding the way in which governing bodies exercised their responsibilities and may exercise them in the future could be appreciated by understanding the relationships between the Head Teacher and the Chair of governors. Their research pointed to three progressional phases in the relationships.

Firstly, and the largest group, consisted of Head Teachers who essentially were in charge of the school with governors having little input. This group was, in itself, subdivided into three groups; Head has major role with governors' approval; Head takes major role by default; Head has major role by out-manoeuvring governors. Clearly, in this group, the Head Teacher has the 'upper hand' as Shearn et al quote from one primary school where the Head Teacher has a major role 'by default'.

"The Head 'worries about the competence of the governors' and feels that they have a 'lack of role understanding' and commitment, despite attempts to educate them'. They are, he said, 'nice people, but have no idea of governorship' and are 'lost in education'." (p 179)



It appears therefore that, in this category of 'Head takes the major role', it is largely through the professional/lay mismatch; that is, the inability of the governing body or the Chair of governors to address the confidence in the perceived relationship.

However, as Shearn et al observe;

“What is of interest in these cases is the difference in perceptions between the participants about what is happening’.” (p 179)

This is crucial to the understanding of such a relationship between Head Teachers and governors. Who influences who? It has been argued that, despite the legislative changes increasing the role of the governing body, the role of the Head Teacher has not changed. Such observations may be made at the 'macro' level. The observations with the 'micro' level may not be as categorical.

The second group consisted of those Head Teachers who shared responsibility with Chairs of Governors on an implicitly agreed basis. The authors further sub-divided this group into two. Firstly, within this shared responsibility was a nurturing relationship, especially between the Head Teacher and Chair. The boundaries of these responsibilities were fluid, each moving to the appropriate position to support the other as the situation in question demanded.

Secondly, within this shared responsibility, there was an emphasis on governors monitoring role. As one Chair of a comprehensive school reported;

“(it’s) a cohesive governing body whose job is to make sure that the school is properly run and not to run it”. (p 183)

In the third group, there are signs that the relationships between Heads and governors are not smooth. In this grouping, there is a greater likelihood that the perception of the Head and the Chair and governors of each other’s roles is different, with all the extremes involved from slightly to very different.

In one example quoted, the Head seemed to suffer considerable tension in his relationship with governors and governors’ meetings cause him ‘a tremendous amount

of stress' (p184) whilst in another secondary school, a very tense relationship existed between the Head Teacher and Chair of governors to the extent that the Chair and Vice-Chair have had meetings with officers of the LEA because of 'dissatisfaction with the school'.

This categorisation is useful in terms of viewing the broad spectrum of relationships that exist. It is interesting to note the significance of the Chair of governors as a 'respondent' to this research together with Head Teacher and a member of senior staff. Clearly the authors took the line that the Chair of governors would represent the general issues of the governors in terms of the original question posed: "a mismatch between government intention and actuality?".

What they do conclude however, is that, despite all of the changes, by the time of their report writing, 1994-95, the governing bodies have, in the main, not accepted responsibility in a practical way and that it is the Head Teacher who has, de facto, an increasing level of responsibility and power.

"The legislation was intended to make the school as a whole more powerful.

In a small number of cases the governors have increased their influence in the school in limited ways and have made life for the Head Teacher a little uncomfortable at times, though that certainly happened before LMS. But for most schools, the governors own role seems to be very limited, sometimes being no more than 'supportive' and 'advising' (Shearn et al 1995)

## **Conclusion**

The research to date, therefore, has reflected a broad spectrum from the generic aspects of school governance (Deem et al), aspect of school leadership from a Head Teacher perspective (Grace, Hustler et al) to explaining the inter-relationship of 'significant others' such as the Head and Chair (Esp and Saran, Shearn et al).

Such an analysis provides a useful background to the present study which has, as its focal point, the role of the Chair of governors. What it hasn't reflected is an in depth analysis of the perceptions of Chairs as to their individual role and how they view the educational landscape from their perspective.

Chairs are both a product of their own socio-economic and cultural background and what they bring in that perspective to the role of Chair and also a manifestation of a figure steeped in traditional roles and rules of Chairmanship irrespective of the context, be it school governing body, independent corporations and multi-national incorporations.

This study has drawn upon the research quoted above and applied aspects to focus solely upon the role of the Chair of governors. The singularity of Grace's audience, albeit changed from Head to Chairs, coupled with the adaptation of methodology from Deem et al, Esp and Saran and Shearn et al, has provided the framework for the research methodology of this research. The policy dimension of Ball's work and the every increasing amount of government legislation has provided the context.

The next stage is to explain the methodology adopted in order to conduct the research.



## **CHAPTER 4**

### **DESIGN OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT**

#### **Introduction**

The reasons for the choice of the research area were outlined in Chapter I and the methodological explanations are now given in Chapter 4. It is pertinent at this point to give a contextual explanation of the reasons why the data was collected as it was from the Local Education Authorities involved in the study. The scope of the research was defined by the real factors of access and availability, time and manageability. Moreover, because it was not a funded scheme for research purposes, cost was also a significant factor.

#### **Setting the scene for the design of the research project**

Scanlon, Earley and Evans, (1999) used a mixture of questionnaire and case study to assess the effectiveness of school governing bodies, but in their case, the questionnaire was on a national scale. Phase 2 of their project consisted of two national questionnaire surveys. The first was a large scale survey of a structured random sample of governors, Chairs of governors and Head Teachers from over 600 schools in England. The second survey was much smaller in scale and involved a sample of 44 schools which had been inspected in the Spring Term 1998 in a period when OFSTED were carrying out a one-term assessment of the effectiveness of governing bodies of the schools that were inspected. Phase 3 of their research consisted of nine case studies of school governing bodies.

Clearly, this was a large scale programme of research carried out within a specific period of time. As a contrast to the Scanlon et al study, the research carried out by Deem Brehony and Heath (1995) was a more focussed study. Their research utilised a longitudinal, multi-method, multi-site, case study strategy, involving a cross section of carefully selected LEA maintained primary and secondary school governing bodies

in two contrasting LEAs. The study was in two phases, identified by time and scale. Phase 1, from 1988-89, in which fifteen governing bodies were observed, occurred at a time of the passing of the 1988 Education Reform Act but at a time of the actual implementation of the 1986 Education Act (No 2) which significantly transformed the composition of governing bodies. Phase 2 involved ten governing bodies in a more focussed research strategy following the introduction of local management of schools under the ERA and was undertaken between 1990 and 1993 using a range of methods, enabling some cross checking of data sources to take place at the analysis stage (Deem p 10).

The questionnaires were targeted at governors as a whole whilst the semi-structured interviews carried out at Phase 2 were aimed at a selection of forty three governors including Head Teachers, Chairs of governing bodies, Chairs of finance committees, parents, LEA and co-opted governors. Therefore, like Scanlon et al's research, the focal point, using a variety of research methodologies and target groups within the governing body, was the role of the governing body – its effectiveness or otherwise.

The research of Esp and Saran (1995) adds a further more focussed dimension.

Undertaking their research in 1994, the researchers concentrated upon the role of the Chair of governors and the Head Teacher and on the developing relationship between them in the management of school.

The schools visited – eleven primary and ten secondary – were situated in the Home Counties and West Country. The choice of schools was not random but were selected upon the basis of 'reasonable mix' and 'time available'. A brief factual questionnaire was used supplemented by semi-structured interviews. Esp and Saran's research attempted to elicit the views of both Head Teacher and Chair of the same school, which had its own associated ethical and methodological problems. This present time study differs from such examples listed primarily in its targeted approach to the role of the Chair of governors. Unlike Scanlon et al (1999), Esp and Saran (1995)



Deem et al (1995), no other ‘player on the field’ was part of the substantive research. The sole focus was upon the Chair of governors and his or her perception of the role of Chair.

### **Determination of Research Instruments**

Grace (1995) in his study of School Leadership identified Head Teachers as the sole focus of his research and used a number of methodological approaches as each phase of his research was undertaken. Essentially, however, he used the interview with the Head Teacher as the main basis of his data collection. In this study of the role of a Chair of a governing body, a range of ‘instruments’ were used, but with different degrees of emphasis. As Johnson (1994) points out:-

“The fundamental principle of planning effective research is to match the research design to the resources available for its completion and to the particular characteristics of the topic under consideration. Silven (1975) considers that a research plan is at best a compromise between the aims of the research, the resources available and the feasibility of the area of study”. (p 171)

Similar to that of Scanlon et al (1999), the primary instrument in this study was a questionnaire, but unlike that research project, the scale of the questionnaire survey was limited to a confined geographical area and a narrower focus.

Scanlon et al used other approaches in later phases, namely semi-structured interviews and case – studies. These methodologies will be referred to later on in this chapter.

Cohen and Manion (1994) concur with Johnson’s assessment of a research design as applied to the use of survey techniques in educational research (p 86). They, in acknowledging the work of Hoinville and Jowell (1978), consider three factors as being of crucial importance. Firstly, a survey’s general purpose must be translated



into a specific central aim. In this case, a questionnaire approach was used to gain an insight, from a fairly representative sample given the small scale nature of the research, of the perceptions of Chairs of governors about their role and the relationships with other ‘agencies’. Secondly, a further prerequisite to survey design is the specification of the population to which the enquiry is addressed. As stated above, the ‘population’ in this research was the Chair of the governing body but the spread of the ‘population’ was a factor in the research design.

In the early stages of the research design, it was decided to address as wide a ‘population’ as was possible, given the practical restraints referred to by Johnson (1994). To this end, the Chairs of each school in three Local Education Authorities in the North-East of England were sent a questionnaire through the post whilst a fourth LEA was involved in the other research instruments. The choice of Local Education Authority was problematical and was determined more by practicality than by the rules of the pure educational research. However, as Deem et al (1995) state, such practicality need not undermine the integrity of the research as long as limitations, or otherwise, of the research design are acknowledged. Reporting on their own research design, Deem et al state their case:

“Despite steps taken to ensure the inclusion of a wide variety of governing bodies in our research sites, it is likely that research done in other geographical regions, conducted entirely in certain areas or in a location with very different political culture, might have produced some different data in terms of power relations, LEA – governing body relations and general responses to education reform. However, so far as the governance process is concerned, there is no particular reasons to suppose that our data are atypical, since we had a good cross-section of types of LEA maintained schools and pupils intakes and at the time all English and Welsh governors were working within a common legislative framework”(p 13-14).

The third factor is the level of resource available to undertake the research. The ‘single-handed’ researcher (Johnson 1994) faces both overt and covert costs which need to be planned carefully in order to maximise effective use of limited resources.

In the instance of this study, questionnaire design, piloting and coding all carried covert costs whilst the printing and posting carried overt costs.

Therefore, the particular subject of the research, the ‘population’ and the resources available to the single handed researcher all continued to make the survey/questionnaire a viable primary instrument to use.

However as Youngman premised:

“Before proceeding to the essential steps in questionnaire design and usage, it should be mentioned that researchers must satisfy themselves that this method is likely to be more effective than others such as interviews, or some combination of them...”(p 248).

### **Triangulation**

Cohen and Manion (1994) define triangulation as:

“The use of two or more methods of data collection in the study of some aspect of human behaviour” (p 233).

In short, this is described as methodological triangulation. In addition to this form, several other types of triangulation have been designated – time triangulation, space triangulation, combined levels of triangulation, theoretical triangulation and investigator triangulation.

Of the six forms of triangulation identified, four have more relevance and application to education: time, space, investigator and methodological triangulation (Cohen and



Manion) (p 238). Of these four, methodological triangulation is the one most frequently used.

With reference to the present study, methodological triangulation was the principal method used. Whilst the research questionnaire was phased over a sixth month period to each of the three LEAs and the interviews, diaries and observations occurred at a later date involving the fourth LEA, the application of time triangulation is not sufficiently appropriate to this study.

Deem et al (1995) used a variety of approaches to triangulation (eg time and investigator triangulation) but their predominant approach was through methodological triangulation. Their study was multi-site and multi-method.

“We knew that a case-study and multi-method, but mostly qualitative research strategy, would not permit broad generalisations beyond the confines of the sites studied”. (p10)

Bearing this in mind and with the need to consider triangulation, a series of semi-structured interviews were also undertaken with a small sample of Chairs of governors in addition to a smaller sample keeping a diary of events in their role as Chair over a period of four weeks.

The use of semi-structured interviews as a support instrument to the research was prompted by the possibility of issues being raised in the analysis of the questionnaire which may require further elucidation. It was also prompted by what Cohen and Manion (1994) summarised as the relative merits of interviews versus questionnaires (p 272).

Whilst there were considerations which could promote the use of an interview, there were other considerations which would prompt the use of a questionnaire. Whilst the questionnaire requires the respondent to record in some way his or her response to a



set series of questions, the interview provides opportunities for asking supplementary and probing questions. The support instruments will be discussed later in this chapter.

### **Note on sampling methodology**

Reference has already been made to the use of three LEAs for the questionnaire and a fourth LEA for the other research instruments. However, it is important to point out the methodological dilemma that was presented with this research. The choice of the three LEAs in the questionnaire survey precluded the author's own LEA due to 'access and ethical reasons' which are discussed later. However, in order to provide as broad a spectrum of research as possible, the author's own LEA was included in the data relating to interviews, diaries and observations. The requirements of valid research techniques in terms of representation were addressed in the following ways. The three LEAs involved in the questionnaire were Northshire, Newshire and Sunshire. However, only Northshire and Newshire were used at the interview stage. Southshire (the author's LEA) replaced Sunshire for the purposes of interview data. This was due to reasons of accessibility and time. In relation to 'accessibility' for interview purposes, this was negotiated with Northshire and Newshire but not with Sunshire. In order to have a greater representation in interview data, the opportunity existed in Southshire to explore the role of the Chair of governors through an extension of the Chairs' Forum. The Chairs' Forum had been established within Southshire to assist in the planning and development of governor training relating to the role of Chairs.

In relation to 'time', the logistics of the research timetable meant that it was easier to use the author's LEA rather than Sunshire for the interviews. A limited sample of Chairs from Southshire did not present the same scale of concern that had existed with the possible distribution of a questionnaire to all Chairs in Southshire. In essence, therefore, Southshire became the fourth LEA.

## **Design of Research Questionnaire**

In considering the structure and design of a research questionnaire, Youngman (1994) states:

“The variety of question structure and the numerous problems associated with them, makes it vital to give careful consideration to all aspects of question specification. Failure to appreciate the degree to which the research outcome may hinge upon the strengths or weaknesses of individual questions could easily invalidate an entire study.” (p 249)

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In order to address such issues, careful consideration was given to the nature of the question, the structure of the question and the structure of the questionnaire. The final questionnaire used appears as Appendix 1.

The questionnaire was sub-divided into a number of sections in order to address key areas of interest. Sections A and I were designed to elicit personal information as to role as a governor (A) and personal information as an individual (I). Section B largely reflected the objective of determining the amount of time spent in the role of Chair and where priorities lay in how this time was used.

Section C addressed the relationship between the Chair and Head Teacher using insights gleaned from Grace's study (1995). Particular emphasis was placed on the Chair's perception of tension in this relationship – did it exist? If it did, how was it manifested? Section D was concerned with the Chair's relationships with the governing body as a whole and the Chair's perception of where the balance lay between productive involvement and involvement by 'simply turning up'.

Section E was devised to elicit responses from Chairs of governors about how effective they believed the role of the governing body to be and how the role of Chair might play a role in this. This section was devised at a time when the effectiveness of the governing body in improving standards in school was not a prominent feature in



school effectiveness studies and arose from a previous submission by the author for the requirements of this course.

Section F was aimed at determining the Chair's view as to information needs – where? how? and what was the quality of the information provided? Again, a strong element of this section was aimed at the relationship between the Chair and the Head Teacher.

Section G attempted to identify the working priorities of Chairs of governing bodies in terms of elements largely in the area of influence of the Chair of governors.

Section H was entitled “Pressures – Changes”. This section attempted to draw from Chairs their views of what ‘pressures – changes’ existed or had taken place in relation to workload, time spent, work pressures, relationships with governors, Head Teachers, LEAs and the DfEE. The section concluded with an invitation to identify what would Chairs like to see happen to improve effectiveness and what they felt had been positive aspects of their role as Chair to date.

The questions were also a mix of structured response questions and open-ended questions.

As Youngman states:

“Another valuable use for the more open type of question is to put the respondent at ease. Excessive structure can progressively generate a feeling of repression or even resentment, simply because respondents feel they are doing justice to their opinions. Open questions, inserted at the end of major sections or at the end of the questionnaire, can act as safety valves and possibly offer additional information”. (p 251)

The questionnaire for this study did attempt some ‘open’ elements’ in some of the sections and did include several ‘open’ elements toward the end of the questionnaire.



It is interesting to note that, in the majority of responses, these open-ended questions (questions 40 – 43) produced a vast amount of information of an ‘anecdotal’ type. In determining the nature of questions, other than overall structure and ‘open’ and ‘closed’ questions, consideration was given to other factors. For instance, whilst variety of content within the overall structure was important, equally important was trying to achieve consistency of response. In other words, consideration was given to the avoidance of excessive precision, excessive elaboration, response overlap and overdue complexity. (Youngman p 256/257).

In terms of the overall design, consideration was also given to those factors which assist in securing a good response rate. Cohen and Manion (1994) refer to a number of factors which may influence this response rate; Such factors include general appearance of questionnaire; clarity of wording and simplicity of design; variety of type of question to provide interest; the use of coloured pages to clarify overall structure; clarity of instructions for each section (p 96/97).

All such factors were built into the initial design of the questionnaire with a slight variation on the use of colour coding. The colour coding was used to differentiate between LEAs rather than sections of the questionnaire.

### **Piloting Initial Questionnaire**

In order to assess the usefulness of the initial questionnaire design and content, an open invitation to a ‘Chairs Forum’ was made to all Chairs of governing bodies in Southshire LEA. The purpose of the Forum was to address matters related to the role of the Chair in the conduct of governing body business. At this Forum, seventeen Chairs of governors attended (approximately 20% of Chairs of governors in the LEA) and during the course of the meeting, each Chair was invited to complete the draft

questionnaire to determine the following —appropriateness of content; appropriateness of structure; ease of completion; time of completion.

This ‘Chairs Forum’ proved invaluable as a sounding board to the initial draft of questionnaire, but also as a later ‘focus’ group to assess the emerging findings of the research. One significant outcome of this piloting was the inclusion of the section on the governors role vis-à-vis ‘school effectiveness’.

At this pilot stage, however, it was the criteria of balance, consistency and coverage which were important, in addition to time for completion. One significant difference between the ‘piloting’ of the questionnaire and the substantive questionnaire was that the ‘pilot’ took place within a context that was self-selecting, ie choosing 14 to attend the Governor Training session, whilst the eventual questionnaire was sent to each and every Chair of governors in the identified LEAs’.

As Youngman states:

“Pilot procedures normally involve a small scale application of the main method, but with questionnaires some modification of this pattern may be desirable. In particular, it is usually advisable to administer some questions personally so that the respondent can be observed and questioned if necessary. By timing each question it becomes possible to identify any questions that appear inordinately difficult and also a reliable estimate of anticipated completion time can be obtained for inclusion the covering letter”. (p 263)

As a result of the piloting in terms of overall timing, an estimate of fifteen minutes was given for the completion of the questionnaire

### **Selection of Sample**

Cohen and Manion (1994) identify the need for the researcher to take sampling decisions early in the overall planning of a survey:



“We have already seen that due to factors of expense, time, accessibility, it is not always possible or practical to obtain measures from a population.

Researchers endeavour therefore to collect information from a smaller group or sub-set of the population in such a way that the knowledge gained is representative of the total population under study”. (p 87)

The total number of governors in schools in England and Wales is estimated at 300,000 from approximately 25,000 schools. Assuming that each school has its own governing body then the total population of Chairs of governing bodies is 25,000. (At the time of writing, this was an assumption. The requirements of the Standards and Framework Act 1998 however will result in all ‘grouped’ governing bodies ie. a governing body looking after two schools, being de-grouped by December 1999). To establish a sub-set was therefore a necessity determined by realistic practicalities. The eventual selection of a sample was akin to what Cohen and Manion refer to as ‘convenience sampling’ which involves:

“... choosing the nearest individuals to serve as respondents and continuing that process until the required sample size has been obtained”.  
(page 88)

With a slight variation on this definition, this study chose as its sample three local LEAs which, for the purpose of the questionnaire in this study, have been referred to as Newshire, Sunshire and Northshire.

The LEAs in the study were chosen for a number of reasons. Firstly, the three LEAs used granted access through their Governing Training Co-ordinators to Chairs of governors in each of their LEAs. Secondly, of the initial five LEAs approached, the three chosen were geographically accessible for follow-up work. Thirdly, the author’s LEA was discounted for ‘ethical’ reasons in that it was felt Chairs of



governors of schools within the author's own authority may not feel confident in answering openly all questions asked in the questionnaire.

The LEAs used in this study were not radically different authorities. They were not chosen for their different characteristics ie 'rural' as opposed to 'urban', 'large' as opposed to 'small', 'big' education spenders as opposed to 'small' education spenders. Newshire is a city with 100 Chairs of governors, Sunshire a city with 130 and Northshire, a large town with 90. Socially and economically, they are relatively similar with similar levels of educational achievement across the age phases.

For OFSTED purposes, the LEAs are deemed to be statistical neighbours. The calculation of statistical neighbours is concerned with finding, for each LEA, the other LEAs with the most similar values of a given set of variables that describe LEA contexts. The number of variables used for this purpose was eighteen, grouped into eight categories of income, wealth and employment; large families; overcrowding; mobility; parental education; ethnic minorities; geographic and size ( in relation to pupil numbers).

Minor differences in characteristics included the following – Newshire and Sunshire had central clerking services offered to their governing bodies which were very successful whilst Northshire was in the midst of developing such a service.

Northshire and Newshire were in the midst of change in the training and support given to governors at the time of the questionnaire whilst Sunshire had a well established system of support.

Therefore, with permission given by the three LEAs to use their mailing lists, a questionnaire was sent to each Chair of governor in the three LEAs, by post, to their home address. The total sample was 320.

The questionnaire was sent with an attached covering letter and return envelope to the home address of all Chairs of governors with a return deadline of two weeks from initial mailing.

Hoinville and Jowell (1978) identify a number of factors in relation to maximising the return rate of postal questionnaires. Firstly, design and layout.

The questionnaire was designed in the light of their observations on the use of tick boxes and standardised settings, repeating instructions, difficult questions in the middle, high interest questions at the end, colour coding of different questionnaires to each LEA and a professional print end product.

Secondly, the initial mailing. Good quality envelopes, typed and addressed to a named person were used with a return stamped addressed envelope included.

Thirdly, a covering letter. The covering letter was an integral part of the questionnaire to highlight the parties associated with the questionnaire and to try and ensure that the respondents read the covering letter.

Fourthly, a follow up letter. This, argue Hoinville and Jowell, is one of the most productive stages to ensure a high response rate. Unfortunately, in the case of this study, neither cost nor time allowed for a follow up letter to be sent. As such, the response rate to the one and only mailing was 43% averaged across all three LEAs which matches the generalised response rate identified by Cohen and Manion (p 99).

A follow up letter may have added up to 20% - 30% to the response rate.

The author of this study believes that, though a 43% rate return is at the lower end of the 'validity threshold', nevertheless, the data provided by the questionnaire returns with regard to gender, age profile, category of governor, years as Chair provides a reasonable cross-section of Chairs of governors found in any cluster of LEAs.

## **Interviews – Data Collection II**

In exploring the conducting and analysing of interviews, Wragg (1994) states;

“In some cases questionnaires or tests will be better than interviews, in other cases interviews may be complementary to other modes of enquiry”(p 268).

In this study, the design of the research methodology included the use of a version of the semi-structured interview to assist and refine the findings from the questionnaire and to provide triangulation. Johnson (1994) uses a checklist for reporting interviews in educational research from Powney and Watts (1987) in which key characteristics are outlined (p 141-142). This was used as a guideline to structure the interview technique used.

Twelve interviews were conducted with Chairs of governors (See Appendix C for sample). The twelve Chairs were selected using ‘convenience sampling’ much in the same way as the initial questionnaire in relation to LEAs. The twelve Chairs of governors came from three ‘local’ LEAs to match a matrix which would generally reflect the ratio of category of schools. The three LEAs were Northshire, Newshire – both used in the questionnaire - and Southshire. Therefore, across three LEAs, four Chairs were identified through the assistance of the Authority’s Governor Training Co-ordinator (GTC), the GTC being informed of the need to meet the overall needs of the matrix.

The use of the GTC was a very useful facilitating factor also recognised in the research methodology of Scanlon et al (1999) when the GTC’s of a number of LEAs were used to assist in the distribution of the initial questionnaire and then in the identification of LEAs for in-depth case-study research. As a result of this, the twelve Chairs represented seven from the ‘primary’ phase, four from the ‘secondary’ phase and one from a special school.



An interview schedule was drawn up based upon a general model of semi-structured interviews. The interview schedule (Appendix 2) was structured into discrete parts aimed at drawing out some of the key elements from the questionnaire data. Several ‘prompts’ were included to assist in the direction of the interview.

The use of probes as defined by Hoinville and Jowell (1978) were also used in the interview sessions to:

“draw out at all relevant responses from respondents; to ensure that inarticulate or shy respondents have as much chance to give their opinions as articulate or talkative ones; to be neutral, interested and persuasive” (p 101–102)

The interview schedule was sent to all interviewees prior to the interview in order that no Chair would be caught out or surprised by the nature of the topics or the questions asked, especially those relating to the sensitivity of relations with the Head Teacher. In the event, Chairs were far more forthcoming about this area than in the responses to the questionnaire. Each interviewee was asked as to whether they had any objection to the interview being taped. It was made clear that the content of the interview was totally confidential and that no individual, school or LEA could be identified.

None declined. The tapes were later transcribed for further analysis.

The interviews took place at a time and at a location of the interviewee’s choice.

None took place in the school of which they were Chair.

Deem (1994), in her discussion of the ‘vulnerability’ of the researcher to the needs and interests of those being researched, offers insights from other researchers as to the possibilities of involving the researched in the design of the research.

Deem states:

“....we could have consulted governors about our questionnaire or interview schedule design, or asked them to vet our publications and accounts .... We did undertake some consultation with some governors in our piloting of questionnaires and interview questions, though to have consulted all those we were researching would have been too time consuming” (p 164).

In this study, the questionnaire was piloted with the researched – a group of Chairs were invited to a meeting – but the interview schedule was treated differently, largely through a shortage of time but also through a real time, closely examined exercise of the ‘first interview’. Two elements were involved. Firstly, the draft schedule was shown to an experienced team of clerks to governing bodies who operated within a central governors clerking system in the author’s LEA. They offered observations in the nature of the questions and tested the meaningfulness of some of them.

This proved a useful exercise in ‘sharpening’ some of the areas.

Secondly, the first interview conducted ‘for real’ was closely examined by the researcher after the event and feedback from the first interviewee was also sought immediately after the interview. In terms of time allocation, structure, relevance of the interview schedule and in terms of the steps taken by the researcher to make the interviewee feel ‘at ease’, it was felt that no significant adjustments needed to be made. This could be described as piloting ‘on the job’.

A decision was taken prior to the first interview that, given the structure of the interview and that the interview schedule was sent to the interviewee prior to the interview in order to allow time for some thought and consideration to be given, the interviewee would be invited to respond to each question without interruption. Prior to each interview beginning, the interviewee was informed that the researcher would

not intervene unless there was a question to be asked for clarification or expansion. This, in one sense, handed control of the interview over to the interviewee. He or she could say as much or as little as they wished. The interviewee was asked simply to indicate when they were moving to the next question for the ease of transcription at a later date.

Such an approach may compromise the 'structure' of the interview and move toward what Cohen and Manion call the 'non-directive interview' whose principal features are:

"the minimal direction or control exhibited by the interviewer and the freedom the respondent has to express her subjective feeling as fully and spontaneously as she chooses or is able" (p 273).

Whilst in certain instances, the interviewees could be seen to 'drift' into anecdote or slight irrelevancies in relation to the point under discussion, in general, this 'freedom' worked to useful effect because the interviewee, having the interview schedule prior to the interview, had thought through the majority of responses and once he or she had stated their views, moved onto the next question.

The interviews with the Chairs of governors were supplemented by interviews with three Governor Training Co-ordinators of three LEAs in the region. The purpose of this supplemental mini interview grouping was to try and assess the professional officer view as to the role of the Chair of governors and the role that the LEA played or could play in training and support to Chairs.

### **Diaries – Data Collection III**

Burges (1994), in his discussion on diaries and diary keeping, outlines the particular features of personalised accounts being recorded over a period through logs, diaries and journals. Whilst accepting that each have their own individualistic characteristics



as a method of recording, he combines the elements of all three into a broad methodological approach of diary keeping (p 301).

“First, it includes a log of all activities and decisions in which the writer has been engaged. This has the advantage to overcoming time problems in diary keeping that have often been commented upon by teacher-researchers ...

Secondly, the ‘diary’ can involve a free-flowing account where the writer reflects on some aspects of the day at the end of a busy day by writing up some aspects in more detail. Finally, it may include a record of a particular situation or event in which the writer has been actively involved and wishes to describe”. (p 301)

For the purposes of this study, the ‘diary’ mainly represented the first and third of Burgess’s observations ie. a structured log of significant events involving the Chair of governors and the recording of a particular event within which the writer had been directly involved. The use of the diary was therefore the third element in the methodological triangulation. Extracts from three diaries representing each LEA are presented at Appendix 4. The purpose of the diary was primarily aimed at recording the nature of contact between the Chair and Head Teacher, the regulating or not of this contact over a set period of time and a view of their feelings about the ‘event’ and the course of action taken.

The ‘diary’ was simply produced using fifteen blank entries top and tailed with a card cover in a spine to make a small booklet. Each page was to be used to describe each separate event. Therefore, a telephone call to the Head Teacher was to be recorded on a page, whilst a meeting of the Board of Governors the next day was to be recorded on a different sheet.

The diary was tested with members of the Governor Support Section of the author's LEA and, as with the questionnaire, shown to Chairs attending a Chairs' Forum for observations and comments.

The recording of data through a 'diary' is by its nature, a 'reflexive' assessment of a particular emotion /feeling/observation at a particular point in time. Therefore, the diary was sent to eight Chairs of governors at different times in order to prevent 'diaries' being reflexive over common issues which happened to be prominent at a particular time. The Chairs were not randomly selected but were within a group recommended by the Governor Trainer Co-ordinator of the participating LEAs. They were, nevertheless, balanced between the primary and secondary divide. Each Chair was asked to record a diary over a continuous four week period.

Burgess (1996) highlights a number of issues related to diary use. Firstly, the need to give guidance on the topic areas that need to be covered. In this study, the diary was fairly structured and steered the diarist into certain categories of observations.

Secondly, the diary is one method of obtaining data and needs to be linked to other research activities. In this study, the diary keeping was one amongst a number of instruments. Thirdly, it is apparent that the context for writing needs to be developed among those who keep diaries. Diarists need to be encouraged to begin and end their diary entries with reflective pieces. In this study, that was not done. Although diarists were invited to make additional comments on the blank side of the sheet, none did so. If the diary had been the most significant instrument of data collection used, this factor may have been included. Finally, there is a series of ethical questions surround the use of diaries, especially as far as intrusion is concerned. This may be particularly true of a 'flow of consciousness' diary but the rather structured format used in this study limited the intrusive element.

Of the eight diarists, six completed the task to varying degrees of detail, clearly reflecting differences in level of contact and involvement of the different Chairs.



## **Observation – Data Collection IV**

In addition to the use of a questionnaire, interview and diaries across three LEAs, and the use of Chair's Forum as a focus group for initial feedback, a series of observations were made at three governing body meetings. The three meetings were held at different times across the primary/secondary divide. On each occasion, the business of the meeting was recorded on an observation chart (Appendix 5) by the non-participant researcher. The main focus of this observational strategy was to explore the relationship of the Chair with the governing body and in particular the Head Teacher. These observations were meant to act as a 'check' upon the findings from the questionnaire in relation to the conduct of business, communication and relations with the Head Teacher.

Noting Williams (1994) advice on content and process and the examples used in recording meetings, an observational schedule was devised which recorded the content and process of a governing body's meeting in periods of 20 minutes. Whilst the generality of the schedule recorded all contributions in terms of time per agenda item, the real focus was upon the contributions of and interactions between the Head Teacher and Chair of governors.

As Cohen and Manion (1994) observed in relation to such observations, never resume your observations until the notes from the proceeding observation are complete.

In this study, a comprehensive note was made following each meeting using the same template in each case in order to achieve some standardisation of overall observation.

In two out of the three observations, the notes were shared with participants in the original meeting (the Head Teacher and Chair).



## **The Validity of this Research Study**

Easterby-Smith et al (1994) in their discussions on the philosophy of research design compare the definitions of validity, reliability and generalizability against the positivist and phenomenological viewpoint of research design. (p 90).

Within the context of this study, which falls within the phenomenological paradigm in which the researcher attempts to focus on meanings, tries to understand what is happening, looks at the feasibility of the situation and develops ideas through induction from data, the question which Easterby-Smith et al ask of validity is “Has the researcher gained full access to the knowledge and meanings of informants?”

In the case of qualitative research design, this is a question which is very difficult to answer with any degree of certainty. The individual researcher may believe that through the instruments used and the identification of the informants, full access has been gained. However, in carrying out the fieldwork, the researcher may have missed a crucial element or perspective which may have influenced the findings of the research if that element had been included.

As Deem and Brehony (1994) state:

“It would be possible to take the view that qualitative research can never be as valid, or indeed as reliable (in the sense that others cannot replicate it exactly) as quantitative research.’ (p 163)

Nevertheless, Deem and Brehony argue (using the arguments of Hopkins, Bollington and Hewett 1989) that using multiple sources of evidence, knowing what is being looked for, having key informants review drafts, collecting data at different points in time and undertaking triangulation can assist in the integrity of the research. External validity can be ensured by multi-site design and replication.

However, Deem and Brehony recognise the reality of research design as opposed to research practice.

“Though these points are useful, like most modes of research

design, they represent an ideal type which is rarely conformed with completely". (p 164)

Their own study addressed internal validity by a mix of research methods in the same research context, comprising accounts from the same actors in different meetings via questionnaires and in interviews, scrutinising the same events and issues on different sites, through the eyes of different actors and through the comparison of research notes with documentary sources used by the case-study governing bodies. They also fed back intermediate findings. External validity was attempted by setting their research in the context of other contemporary research and by using a range of theoretical approaches.

This present study, although different in research methodology, used a similar approach to establish validity. A mix of research methods were used in the same research context, a comparison of accounts of the same action (Chairs of governing bodies) in different meetings; scrutinising similar events in different sites – all were applied to establish validity.

With regard to the questionnaire, it was first piloted with a group of Chairs of governing bodies and then amended in the light of observations. The initial findings resulting from the questionnaires were fed back to a series of 'Chairs Forums', where Chairs were invited to discuss aspects of Chairmanship. Over a period of seven months, two Forums were held where such initial findings were reported. The Forums consisted of Chairs of governors from the author's LEA who were not participants in the questionnaire.

At the first Forum, eleven Chairs and at the second Forum, nine Chairs attended. At both Forums, not one Chair dissented from the initial findings and indeed offered explanations as to why such findings were reached. Whilst this 'feedback' does not entirely meet the concept of 'respondent validation', the fact that an external body of

Chairs concluded that the findings were such that they could identify with, gives some sense of validation to the approach used.

With regard to the use of interviews, note was taken of Cohen and Manion (1994) warnings in the use of interview as a research tool in relation to validity.

“Studies reported by Cannell and Kahn (1986), in which the interview was used, seemed to indicate that this was a persistent problem. In one such study, subjects interviewed on the existence and state of their bank account, often presented a misleading picture ...

The reviewers suggest that references about validity are made too often on the base of face-validity, that is, whether the questions asked look as if they are measuring what they claim to measure” (p 281).

In order to achieve greater validity in a research design, Cohen and Manion go on to argue, that the amount of bias needs to be minimised as much as possible.

“The sources of bias are the characteristics of the interviewer, the characteristics of the respondent and the substantive content of the questions. (p 281-282)

A number of steps were taken, therefore, to minimise bias and increase validity. The methodology of the collection of the data has already been referred to but the elements are listed here to formally indicate their reference to validity. Firstly, the questions for the interviewer were ‘tested’ and then, prior to the interview with the Chair of governors, the questions to be put were sent to the respondent. In this way, nothing came as a surprise. Secondly, in the conduct of the interview, since the respondent had the questions to hand and for some some days previously, it was agreed with the interviewee that, unless they had a misunderstanding with the question (which none had) they would just move through each question uninterrupted and speak to each question in turn. This method of ‘semi-structured’ interview by means of a set of questions to be asked with additional prompts together with a ‘flow



of consciousness' (which often followed) was an attempt to overcome interview bias. In other words, apart from the construct of the questions (which were tested) little interference was to be made from the putting of the questions.

With regard to the diaries kept by six Chairs, as reported earlier, steps were taken to explain the purpose of the diary to the Chairs (who were not randomly selected) but after that, Chairs were free to use the diary as they wished within the four week period. The diary was a useful instrument to cross check issues of time commitment, area of business and attitude.

As Cohen and Manion (1994) point out in discussing the problem, in gathering and analysing accounts as listed by Merzel (1978).

“A second problem that Merzel raises is to do with the actors meanings as a source of bias. How central a place, he asks, ought to be given to actors' meanings in formulating explanations of events. Should the researcher exclusively and invariably be guided by these considerations? To do so would be to ignore a whole range of potential explanations which few researchers would wish to see excluded from consideration.” (p 228).

As the diary was only one instrument amongst others used and it was used by a range of Chairs over a period of time, the sources of potential bias were limited although not completely eliminated. The author is well aware of the tendency of those who are the focus of research to see the world from their perspective and to limit the role of others in the success of developments or initiatives. Whilst this was never overtly evident in this research study, the clear focus upon the Chair may have influenced those interviewed, questioned, observed, to a certain degree.

Therefore the use of different instruments over different periods of time in different LEAs contributed to the validity of the research process. The author is clearly conscious of the fact that the randomness of sampling within the research design was limited which must limit the generalisation of the conclusions of the research. In

qualitative research design, however, the ideal objective experimental research design is not possible. The last word in this section can be left to Deem and Brehony (1994).

“Perhaps then, validity is best regarded as something which is to be worked towards rather than fully achieved”. (p 165)

### Access and Ethics

In discussing the ethical codes governing research, Berger and Patchner (1988) lay down three requirements for meeting the provision of informed consent which underpins all ethical research. These are: that subjects are competent to give their consent; that subjects be given adequate information about the proposed study; that consent is voluntary (p 95).

In this study, the weighty significance given to these three requirements in some areas of social research eg. research involving children, was not present. In relation to establishing informed consent, all Chairs of governing bodies in each of these three LEAs were given an explanation of the research in an accompanying letter to the questionnaire. With reference to the interviews, all Chairs were contacted personally by the researcher and the purpose of the research explained. Arrangements for the interview were then discussed and agreed. No one who was approached refused to be interviewed. Again, in the keeping of a diary, all participating Chairs were fully informed of the nature of the research and the purpose of the diary.

As such, all three conditions to informed consent were met whilst undertaking this research.

Negotiating access was slightly more problematical. Initially in choosing three LEAs for the questionnaire, the author's LEA was to be included. However, with regard to the author's own LEA, it was felt that the validity of the inclusion of a section on the Chair-Head Teacher relationships may be compromised when the researcher was a senior officer of the LEA and known to all Head Teachers and Chairs of governors.

Despite assurances of confidentiality and anonymity that could have been given to ensure an 'open' response, the sensitivities of the research questions were felt to be such that access to the author's own LEAs Chairs of governors to the questionnaire was not an option. Likewise, in the original choice of a third LEA – a large mixed urban – rural LEA - access was denied by the Director of Education of that LEA for very similar reasons. Access was finally agreed with the eventual participating LEAs by writing to the Director of Education and by discussing the research methodology personally with each LEA Governor Training Co-ordinator. In each case, a copy of the questionnaire was sent to the LEA for their consideration prior to them agreeing further access to the Chairs of governing bodies in their LEA.

Once permission had been granted, the issue of sending the questionnaires to the Chairs of governors had to be addressed. Each LEA was sensitive to the information released in terms of names and addresses. In the end, two LEAs agreed to distribute the questionnaire documentation to Chairs on behalf of the researcher (the researcher supplying all necessary questionnaires and envelopes and pre-paid return envelopes) and one LEA agreed to release relevant details for the researcher to post direct.

Access to those Chairs who were interviewed and who kept diaries was gained through the channel of the LEA's Governor Training Co-ordinator.

Cohen and Manion (1994), in their discussion on ethical dilemmas in educational research, raise several important considerations which have to be in the forefront of any researcher's mind. These relate to privacy, anonymity and confidentiality in carrying out research.

In each phase of the research, all three factors, either in total or in respect of each factor relevant to a particular phase, were carefully considered. In terms of privacy, the sensitivity of the information, the setting of the gaining of the information and the information dissemination were all observed in relation to interviews. The interviews were conducted in 'neutral' territory and assurances given as to recognising that some



information given may be sensitive and that no individual or school could be identified from the research data gained in interview. Likewise, with regard to anonymity and confidentiality, assurances were given in the letters to Chairs and in explanations to Director of Education and Governor Training Co-ordinators that no individual, no school and no LEA would be identified by name or obvious character. Access to observe the three governing body meetings was not a problem. A request made to the Head Teacher who was fully briefed as to the purpose of the research was referred to the Chair of governors and in each case, permission was granted. It would appear that once the researcher got beyond the 'gatekeepers' of the LEA, attitudes to being observed or interviewed, or asked to keep a diary, were fairly relaxed. The author's ethical standpoint did exercise some thoughts as a professional education officer as opposed to researcher. Clearly, the researcher knew many officers in other LEAs from which Chairs were interviewed or who returned questionnaires, where comments were given/observations made which were not always complementary and where a significant pattern of comment was emerging on a particular aspect of a particular LEA's service. Some Chairs knew the researcher first and foremost as an Education Officer to whom they may professionally relate yet this was a research project outside the mainstream of the researcher's current professional duties. In such instances, any concerns which Chairs had in this area (and only two queried this standpoint and then only briefly) were addressed by emphasising the integrity of the professional officer and at the same time the ethical considerations involved in such research. Cohen and Manion's (1994) observations may have also provided a useful explanation.

"Finally, we live in a relative universe and it has been said that relativity seeks adjustment; that adjustment is art, and that the art of life lies in a constant adjustment to our surroundings. What better precept for the art of the ethical researcher" (p 382).

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has sought to describe the methodological basis of the research and, in doing so, has attempted to place it within the context of other research studies which are relevant.

However, the initial reference point perhaps needs to be restated at this point. The focus of this research has been upon the Chair of governors and the Chair alone – no other ‘player in the field’ was subject to this research. It can be argued that this is both a strength and a weakness. A strength in that, for the first time, the role of the Chair of governors has been ‘put under the microscope’. It is the sole subject of study similar to, but slightly different in methodology and perception, to Grace’s study in school leadership. A weakness in that other ‘players in the field’ are denied a voice. It is this author’s submission that the strength of this approach outweighs the weakness, bearing in mind that, as demonstrated in this chapter, the role of the Chair has been an element in a number of research studies but only as one element amongst many. Previous research has not given a voice solely to the role of the Chair. The data from this research can therefore be used as a reference point in future research in the area of school governance in its isolation of Chairs’ perception of their role in a school governing body. The following chapter presents the research findings in the context of other relevant research.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **ANALYSIS OF DATA AND COMMENTARY**

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter is to present the findings of the research undertaken and to offer an analysis of the data in the context of other related research findings. The structure of the reporting of the results is presented in the same way as the main research instrument, the questionnaire, was structured. The questionnaire was divided into nine sections

A – Context

B – Time commitment

C – Chair – Head Teacher relationships

D – Chair – Governing Body relationships

E – Chair – Governing Body effectiveness

F – Information

G – Working Practices

H – Pressures – Changes

I – Additional Information

This chapter will follow the same section division. In doing so, the information gained from the other research instruments – semi-structured interviews, diaries, non-participant observation – is also reported within this structure.

As outlined in chapter 4, the questionnaire was sent to Chairs in three LEAs – Newshire, Northshire and Sunshire whilst the interviews and diary recording also involved the author's own LEA of Southshire in addition to the three LEAs. The three examples of observation of governing body meetings were all from the author's LEA. Reference to minutes of governing body meetings also relates to the analysis of documentary evidence from the author's own LEA.



## **A Chairs of Governors – Personal Profiles**

It is appropriate at the outset to try and give a context to the Chairs that responded to all of the research instruments used. The general characteristics of Chairs in this research are identified through the responses received to the appropriate sections of the survey. By identifying general personal characteristics, it may be possible to gain a greater insight into the thinking and attitudes of those governors who act as ‘Chair of the governing body’.

### **1. Gender Characteristics.**

In this present study, female Chairs were outnumbered more than two to one by male Chairs. A similar pattern was also apparent in relation to the school phase. In the secondary sector, only a quarter of Chairs were female whilst in the primary sector a third of Chairs were female. A difference did exist in relation to the Special Schools where male Chairs outnumbered female Chairs by more than two to one.

Scanlon et al (1999) reported that;

“Previous surveys have found that approximately one half of governors but less than one third of Chairs were female. (Keys and Fernandes 1994). In the current study, women formed the majority in the governors sample (59%), but this pattern was reversed for Chairs where men outnumbered women by a ratio of almost two to one (64% male and 36% female). Only a quarter of secondary Chairs of governors were women compared with 37% for primary schools. In the case of special schools, there was an almost equal balance between males and female Chairs of governors”. (p 39).

It would appear therefore, that a more localised sample of Chairs from three LEAs mirrors the findings of a much larger sample in relation to gender. However, in relation to the more localised findings, it was interesting to note that the male-female ratio across the three individual LEA’s varied considerably. In Sunshire the male-

female ratio was almost four to one; in Northshire, the ratio was almost three to one, but in Newshire, the ratio was less than two to one.

## **2. Age Characteristics**

Once again the age profile of Chairs of governing bodies is similar to the findings of Scanlon et al in that over 80% of Chairs were over the age of 41. (in Scanlon et al's survey the age category was 45).

There were no significant variations between the three LEAs within the age categories with the exception of the under 40's, where Sunshire had 20% whilst Northshire had 10% and Newshire less than 5%.

## **3. Ethnicity**

Out of 132 respondents, only 1 Chair identified him/herself in a category of ethnic origin different from 'White'. Scanlon et al report a 2% ethnic minority representation as Chair in their findings.

## **4. Present Role in Life**

This category of response was specifically termed "Present role in Life" and respondents had a choice of four alternatives. No respondent failed to identify a category. The four categories were – at home; in work; not in work, retired

Out of 133 respondents, 63% identified themselves as 'In work'. A closer analysis of occupational category volunteered by those 'In work' found that 78% were within the professional/managerial-technical categories. 36% identified themselves as retired whilst less than 0.5 % were child supporters at home or out of work.

Clearly then, a significant majority of Chairs were professional people in jobs which brought their own demands in terms of time, responsibilities and commitment. This pattern was reported in each LEA with a greater representation of the professional/managerial category in Northshire and a consequent decrease in the percentage of those in the 'retired' category in that LEA.

Should this be a surprising outcome? There is a remarkable similarity in these findings with the Scanlon et al (1999) research findings of 64% of Chairs 'In Work' and of these, 88% were in the professional/managerial – technical categories. In the majority of cases, therefore, governing bodies were being chaired by individuals from a broad spectrum of occupations where the possibility of bringing 'professional skills' to bear upon their role was greater than in other categories. One possible outcome of this could be the greater efficiency and effectiveness of business in the governing body. This aspect is discussed later in this chapter.

With such a high percentage of Chairs in work, there has been a pressure upon Chairs (and governors in general) to examine the timing of meetings. In the author's own LEA (not one of the LEAs in the questionnaire survey), since the completion of the implementation of Local Management of Schools in 1993 (by 1995 with Special Schools), there has been a significant move from morning or afternoon meetings to twilight or early evening meetings. This has had a consequential effect upon the organisation and management of the central clerking service.

## **5. Category of Governor**

In chapter 2, the views expressed by Joan Sallis in 1977 with respect to the predominance of political nominees as Chairs of governors, were discussed. She argued that such political nominees would be a difficult obstacle to overcome.

Despite the Taylor Report, her reservations were clear about the opening up of the Chair's position to other categories of governors.

Several factors have emerged since the initial observations by Sallis which make a reassessment necessary. Such factors include the limiting of the role of the LEAs' during the period 1979- 1997, the recognition of the school as the focal point of local decision making and the empowering of parents and the local community business representatives. They have all contributed to a change which today, whilst not weakening Sallis' argument, begins to undermine it. From the 131 respondents to the



question which identified 'Governor category', 38% of Chairs belonged to the LEA category whilst 32% were co-opted, 17% foundation and almost 13% were parent governors.

Across the three LEAs however, there were significant differences. In Northshire, whilst only 25% of Chairs were LEA nominated, 33% were co-opted and 15% were parent governors. In Newshire, 48% of Chairs were LEA nominated, 25% were co-opted and less than 1% were parent governors.

The reasons for such difference between LEAs are not clearly identifiable. In Newshire, a large metropolitan city dominated by a mix of both old and new Labour, the LEA category of governor dominated the Chair's position. In Northshire, a smaller town with a Council structure which was in the forefront of local government reform, the LEA nominees as Chair are in the minority. There is, therefore, evidence of a change since the original comments of Sallis in 1977.

A tentative proposition at this stage may be that the attitudinal and cultural change taking place in the last quarter of the twentieth century, with regard to the relationship between central and local government, was having a 'knock on' effect to the educational system locally delivered. That is, at the time of this research, as alluded to in chapter 1, the change of Government for the first time in 18 years was taking place. Yet the Chairs of governors and local political structures had witnessed, in the immediate years before, a determined move to limit local authority influence. The realities of the political situation pre-1997 may have influenced the views of the dominant local political parties, elected members and LEA nominees that there were other priorities in local political life other than seeking the Chair of a school governing body. This was all the more so when the possibility existed that the role of the LEA in the governance of schools may be questioned or certainly limited. The ballots for Grant Maintained Status at the time were evidence of that concern.

It is interesting to note also that, whilst there was a variance within the three LEAs to LEA Chairs of governors, that variance also existed at the parent governor level. Given the centrality of the role of the parent in the choice of their child's school, linked with the philosophical commitment to 'Choice and Diversity' in 1993, it could be surmised that the realisation of parental empowerment and the limiting of LEA support and guidance would begin to take effect upon the composition of Chair of governors. Yet in this study, the percentage of parent governors as Chair was less than 13%. This was also reflected in the Scanlon et al study (1999) which identified a 12% sample of Chairs as parent governors. Clearly then, whilst there is a recognisable shift in the category of Chair from the LEA dominated school governing body in the pre-LMS days to a position where the opportunity for a Chair to be nominated from another category has increased, it would appear that the change process would need to continue to counter fully the viewpoint of Sallis.

## **6. Years of Experience as Chair**

Across the three LEAs, 56% of Chairs had held the office of Chair for less than four years whilst 29% had been Chair for between five and eight years. Those who had been Chair for between nine and twelve years counted for 10% whilst 5% had been Chair for thirteen or more years.

There was evidence to show from the questionnaire data that two thirds of Chairs with the longest service, ie. about nine years of service, were LEA governors whilst there was a much more varied mix in the Chairs with four year or less service.

An interesting insight on the 'category of governor' and 'years as Chair' elements of the questionnaire comes from the interview with a female parent governor of a primary school in Newshire who had been Chair for some years.

"I didn't actually ever want to become a Chairman; it was by default really. We were on the boundary between two wards and two of the Councillors were in one ward and one in another and he was Chair. They (the two Councillors) decided they did not like the way he was going and removed him from our governing body. At the next governing body meeting, we assumed one of the

other Councillor representatives would come to be elected Chair; the way it had always been and no-one came ..... This is my third term of office ... and since then we have not really had (there are times when I have thought that it was time for someone else to take on the role) ... anybody who has had that wish to do so. I think things are coming a little bit full circle at the moment in that we now again have our full LEA complement on the governing body which we have not had ... for six years now”. (Chair, Newshire - Interview 1)

This parent governor, in her third term of office, recognised the effect of the ‘political vacuum’ in LEA representation in allowing other categories of governor to become Chair but she also realised that this was a result by default in terms of LEA representation. This Chair went on to state that another change in the governor landscape was obviously a possibility in her school. A further observation was made on the point of length of service as Chair at one of the two Chair’s Forums held in Southshire LEA.. One Chair commented that;

“If a governing body has regard for the person to be Chair, then length of time served is not a factor”. (Chairs Forum 2)

## **B Chair of Governors – Time commitments**

### **1.Number of Meetings**

If the proposition argued in chapter 2 has credence, that the role of the Chair of governors has become more significant and central to the effective operation of school governing bodies, then this ought to be reflected in the increase in time commitment. Certainly, from a different perspective, this would appear to be the case. Grace (1995) quotes one male secondary Head Teacher;

“Dealing with the governing body was something that took an hour or two a month. Suddenly, overnight, the ERA has made it a major part of my job, its altered my life ... there are very few days, certainly no weeks, when I do not either have to be in contact with the Chairman of governors, having meetings with the Chairman or having meetings



with other governors. Having much longer meeting and preparing papers ... falls at my door". (p 82).

As Grace commented, the increase in workload associated with the new patterns of shared leadership with governors was 'massive' (p 82). If the Head Teacher, post LMS, identified an increase in time and commitment to the governing body and, in particular, the Chair of governors, is this reflected in the views of Chairs?

Figure 5.1 illustrates the commitment in relation to full governing body meetings. Chairs, in responding to the questionnaire, identified the number of meetings that were held in the year previous to them completing the questionnaire. (The survey was sent to each LEA at slightly different times during the course of two terms).

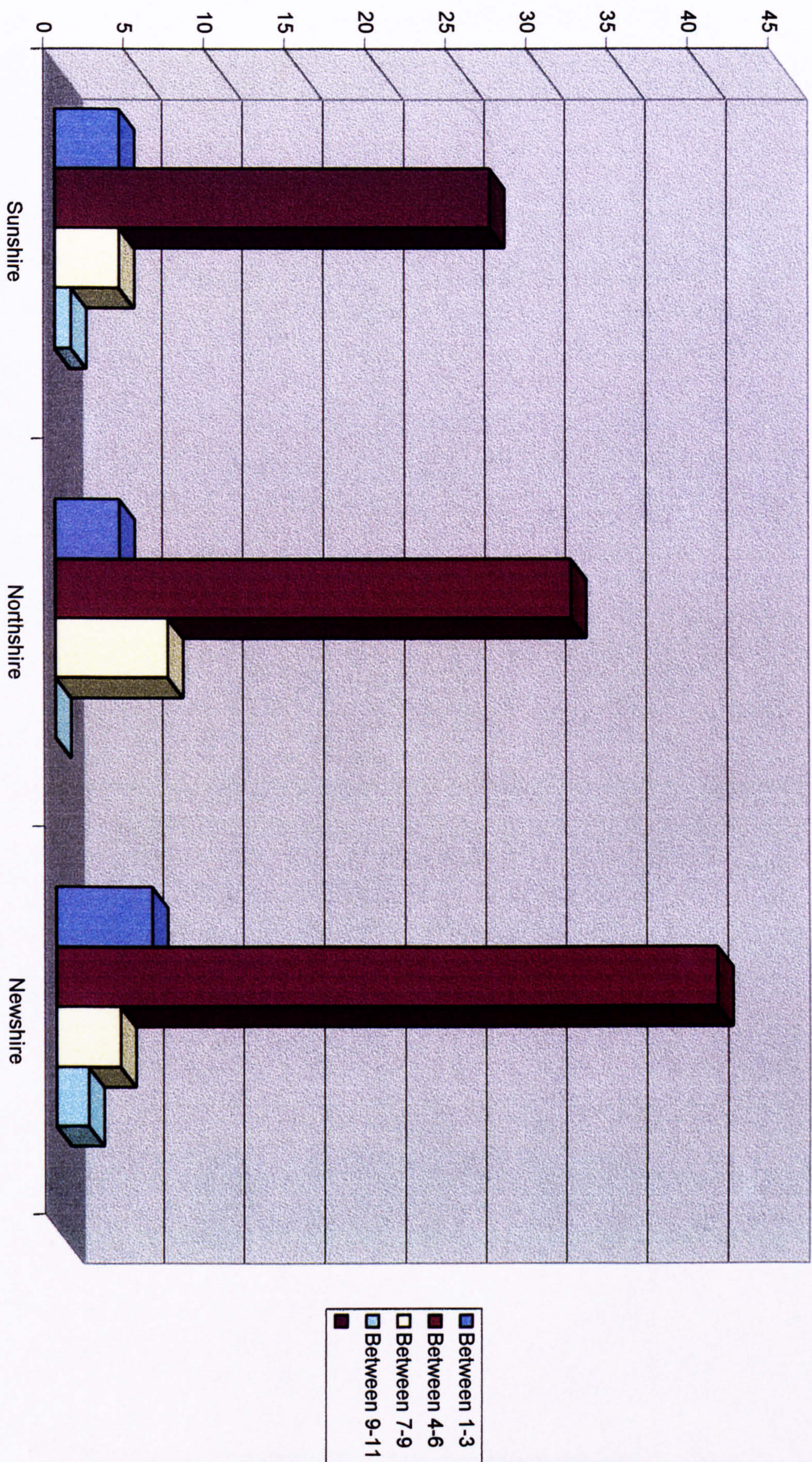
From 5.1 (N = 133), it can be seen that the vast majority of Chairs (75%) from across all three LEAs had held between four and six meetings in the year in which the survey took place. The statutory requirement is for only one meeting of the full governing body a term.

## **2. Illustrative extract from non-participating LEA in the questionnaire**

In order to give more dimension to this figure, an analysis was undertaken within the author's LEA – Southshire- of a random sample of termly governing body meetings over three terms. The sample reflected the various phases and sectors and simply looked at the length of the termly meetings. The length of each meeting as determined by the recorded minutes of that meeting was noted.



### 5.1. Number of meetings of the governing body





**5.2 Length of Meeting of Governing Bodies**  
**Sample from a non-participating LEA**

<b>Type of School</b>	<b>Sample Range</b>	<b>Average length of Meeting</b>
Primary (Maintained)	10	1 hr 45 mins.
Comprehensive (Maintained)	5	1 hr 59 mins.
Aided (RC)	3	1 hr 40 mins.
Special	2	1 hr 50 mins
Overall average	20	1 hr 50 mins

Within the range of sampling, the time of meetings varied from the lower range of 1 hr 15 minutes to the higher range of 2 hrs 30 mins. This brief analysis refers only to termly meetings.

The translation of such a level of meetings into hours spent gains more significance when the responses to the Chairs' involvement in committees are considered. The role of the Chair of governors in relation to committees has not been the focus of much research to date. Yet it is clear from DfEE guidance over issues relating to school governance and delegation to committees, from the statutory requirements for such committees as Discipline and Appeals and from the analysis of governors minutes within the author's LEA, that there has been a proliferation of committees of the full governing body since the introduction of LMS. With some of the committees having powers delegated to them for executive decision making, there is a need to keep in focus the work of a governing body's committees.

**3. The Role of the Chair in Committees of the Governing Body**

In an analysis of the questionnaire responses in relation to the Chairs' role in committees, it is interesting to note the position of the Chair in the chairmanship of committees.



In simplistic terms, the common committees across each governing body in each LEA focussed upon Finance, Staffing (Personnel), Pay, Premises, Discipline and Appeal with a concentration in two LEAs upon Curriculum. The committees of which the Chair of the governing body also acted as Chair varied across the range.

Across the three LEAs, of those school governing bodies which had delegated powers to a Finance Committee, 59% had the Chair as Chair of the Committee. The school governing bodies which had delegated powers to a Staffing Committee had 59% of Chairs as Chair of the Committee. The school governing bodies which had delegated powers to a Pay Policy Committee had 52% of Chairs as Chair of the Committee. The percentage of Chairs of governing bodies in relation to being Chair of other committees ranged from 21% in Premises Committees, 34% in Discipline Committees to 22% in Appeals Committees.

From such an analysis, therefore, it is practicable to assume that the time commitment to the duties of Committees is additional to the already time consuming matters of a Chair of governors role. It also illustrates the potentially ‘hegemonic’ effect of the role of the Chair in the overall development of the governing body.

#### **4. Time Commitments other than Meetings**

The analysis of diary entries from the Chairs who recorded their actions over a four week period also tends to illustrate the varied intensity of the time commitment of Chairs of governors. Over a period of four weeks, Chairs were asked to record certain information from a tightly structured observation sheet. (see Appendix 4)

Table 5.3 illustrates the recording of one Chair who was involved in a number of interactions over a period of one week. (note; the numbering of the Chairs’ diaries does not relate to the numbering of the interviews)

### **5.3 Chair 1 - Diary**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Event</b>	<b>Time Spent</b>	<b>Attitude to Event</b>
19 April	Telephone Conversation (Deputy Head Teacher)	12 mins.	Positive
19 April	Telephone Conversation (LEA)	5 mins.	Positive
19 April	Finance (Building Sub- Committee)	1 hr. 15 mins.	Very Positive
21 April	Telephone Conversation - Parent Governor	8 mins.	Positive
22 April	Telephone Conversation (Head Teacher)	10 mins.	Positive

It can be seen from these diary entries over a period of one week that the essence of the communication was by telephone with one meeting of the Committee for Finance (Buildings). Yet the point to note also was the varied nature of the contact with the different parties - Deputy Head Teacher, Parent Governor, LEA and Head Teacher.

A second example from a different Chair's diary shows yet another perspective.

### **5.4 Chair 2 - Diary**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Event</b>	<b>Time Spent</b>	<b>Attitude to Event</b>
19 April	Telephone Conversation (Head Teacher)	30 mins.	Unclear
21 April	Meeting with Head Teacher	1 hr. 30 mins.	Positive
22 April	Telephone Calls to LEA (3) Telephone Calls to Governors (2)	30 mins.	Positive
26 April	Meeting with Head Teacher followed by further follow- up work	2 hrs. 40 mins.	Positive
27 April	Meeting with Head Teacher And Union regarding Disciplinary matter	3 hrs 30 mins.	Positive

In this example, the number of meetings clearly increased the time commitment. This reflected a particular staff discipline issue in the school at the time and therefore the time identified needs to be seen in this context.

To get a more balanced perspective, the average of time spent for each of the diarists was calculated over the length of the diary entries. Diarist 1 (a Chair of a large successful comprehensive school) averaged 3 hrs 30 mins. whilst Diarist 2 (a Chair of a middle sized primary school) averaged 7 hrs 30 mins.

These diarist entries, therefore, give a useful insight into the range of contact which a Chair of governors has over a defined period in addition to the termly meetings.

The picture emerges that attendance at meetings represents only a part of the time commitment.

## **5. Chairs Assessment of Time Commitments**

Chairs have identified a commitment of time as a change in recent years.

This is evidenced by the Chairs' views of their own time commitment via the questionnaire. In relation to the amount of time Chairs spent a week on governing body business, 44% of respondents across all three LEAs stated that they spent 5 hours or less, 42% of Chairs said they spent between 5 hours and 8 hours per week whilst less than 1% spent more hours per week. Overall, 78% of Chairs (116) identified an increase in time spent fulfilling the role of Chair. The reasons were many. A Chair of an aided primary school felt that, generally, there were demands upon governors but that the Chair has to have more in-depth knowledge of education in order to "keep up" (Governor 15 Newshire), whilst a Chair of a maintained primary school felt that the time element had increased because the Chair had to keep up to date to be able to facilitate discussion (Governor 46 Newshire). One Chair of an aided primary school in Northshire put it succinctly.



“The time element has increased from one meeting per term pre LMS to 14 – 16 Sub-Committees and whole governing body meetings per year” (Governor 43), Northshire.

Other reasons listed ranged from OFSTED preparation, the need to be visible around the school, lots of reading, more time in discussion with Head Teachers and a general increase in involvement with aspects of the school, eg. pupil exclusion hearings.

Generally, therefore, Chairs, from the survey data, felt that the pressures on time had increased. The interesting point to note was the belief from Chairs that, because of their position, they needed to be more informed, up to date and less vulnerable to lack of knowledge of facts and procedures than the other governors on the governing body. They felt the need to be ever ready in order to conduct the increasing number of meetings effectively and efficiently.

## **6. Chair's Prioritisation of Time**

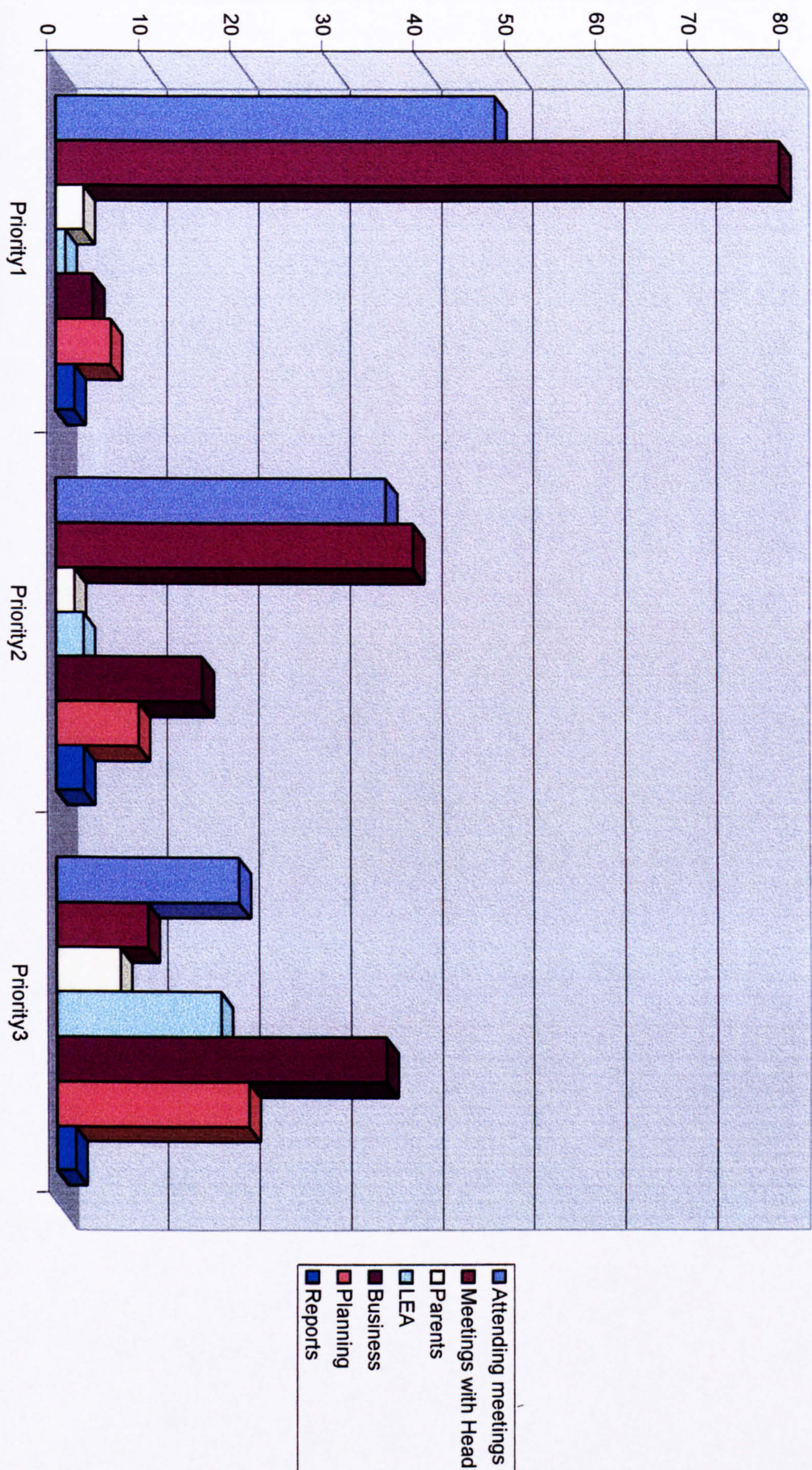
Whilst the time element had increased and the reasons for this identified, how did Chairs prioritise their time? When asked to place, in order of priority, aspects of the role of the Chair in terms of time spent (n=132), 59% (79) of the Chairs responding placed ‘discussions with the Head Teacher’ first, whilst 36% (48) of Chairs placed “attending meetings of the Governing Body” first. If the second priority was taken into account, 29% (39) placed ‘meetings with Head Teachers’ as a second priority and 27% (36) placed ‘attendance at Governing Body meetings’ as a second priority.

Figure 5.5 illustrates the Chairs’ prioritisation of time over a range of aspects of the role of Chair. Only the first three priorities are shown for illustrative purposes.

As clearly shown, the meetings and discussions with the Head Teacher are a priority for Chairs in terms of time spent. Such a point, but from a Head Teacher perspective, was also made by Grace (1995).



## 5.5 Aspects of Chairs' role





“It was recognised that work intensification for Head Teachers had occurred in relation to school governance. There were meetings of the governing body and of its various sub-committees. Meetings were much longer and the documentation for them had also increased in volume and complexity. For some Head Teachers the continuity of Head Teacher leadership was reinforced by the governors ‘need’ for information and guidance.” (p 79)

Scanlon et al (1999), in surveying workload and time spent on governor activity analysed time spent by Head Teachers, Chairs and governors. In relation to Chairs, the range of hours worked varied enormously, but using an average of 40.62 hours per term over a 13 week term, they calculated a Chair of governors spent, on average, just over 3 hours per week on governing body business (2- 3 hrs using the mode). (p 48). In relation to this study, this assessment of 3 hrs appears to be rather on the low side given 42% of respondents identified between 5 —8 hrs per week and the diarist’s average between the two quoted examples earlier was within the 5 – 8 hr range.

### **C. The relationship between the Chair and Head Teacher**

#### **1. Context**

As previously referred to, Deem, Brehony and Heath (1995) clearly state the significance of the Chair – Head Teacher relationship.

“Heads and Chairs are key movers in the governance of schools” (p 142).

They go on to comment.

“The nature of the relationship between Heads and Chairs of governors is bound to vary . If that relationship is habitually conflictual or is not based on any mutual respect and trust, then it can be both disruptive and marked by the frequent use of episodic power. However, where the Head and Chair can establish a reasonably amicable relationship, which they appeared to do in

eight of ten of our research sites, then power plays may involve concerns and collaboration. Indeed, for most Heads we spoke to, being able to share some confidences with the Chair of governors was an important mechanism for helping the cope with the strains and stresses of the job as well as a means of manipulating the governing body to adapt mutually desirable outcomes. (p 142 – 143).

Deem et al's study, therefore, saw the Chair – Head Teacher relationship as one of mutual support in terms of personal relations but also as players in a power game; each party having particular agendas which, when they happily coincide, are fruitful and developmental relationships.

Grace (1995) when addressing the issue of power-relations of school leadership noted:

“For most Head Teachers, the key issue was not the representativeness of school governing bodies but whether or not such bodies were ‘good’ or ‘interfering’, ‘activist’ or ‘co-operative’ and, in particular, whether or not harmonious working relations could be established with the Chair of the governing body, seen as a strategic power holder”. (p 86)

Grace further commented;

“Power relations could be effected by the social, political and cultural composition of the school governors and by the relativism and attitudes of the Chair of governing body in particular”. (p 79)

Esp and Saran (1995) also offered insights into this relationship.

“Heads saw the Chair as leader of the governing body. Some saw the role as more than just managing meetings or setting policies and frameworks for the school. The Chair was said to ‘set the tune of relationships, with the governing body’ and to exercise ‘a leadership role complementary to that of the Head’. (p 71).



The issues of mutual respect, trust, critical friend, shared vision, were all evident from Esp and Saran's study of this particular relationship.

## **2. Chair - Head Teacher Working Relationships**

In this present study, the relationship between Chair and Head Teacher was also examined through questionnaire and interview. In an attempt to try and 'position' the Chair in his or her relationship with the Head Teacher, Chairs were asked to identify with one of three descriptors of the working relationship. Figure 5.6 details the responses across the three LEAs from the questionnaire. (n=153)

It is clear that the perceptions of 49% (76) of Chair respondents felt that, of the three descriptions, the 'mutual supporter on an equal footing' was the most appropriate one. This raises a number of issues. Mutual supporter reflects Deem et al's findings whilst the 'equal footing' partially reflects the Esp and Saran's finding of 'leadership role complementary to the Head'. However, would this perception be shared by the Head Teacher? The description gaining the lowest response rate of 14% (30) was the 'Head acts as a professional adviser'. Was this a reflection of the Chairs' view that this minimized the Chairs' role? Would Head Teachers concur more with this view than other descriptors?

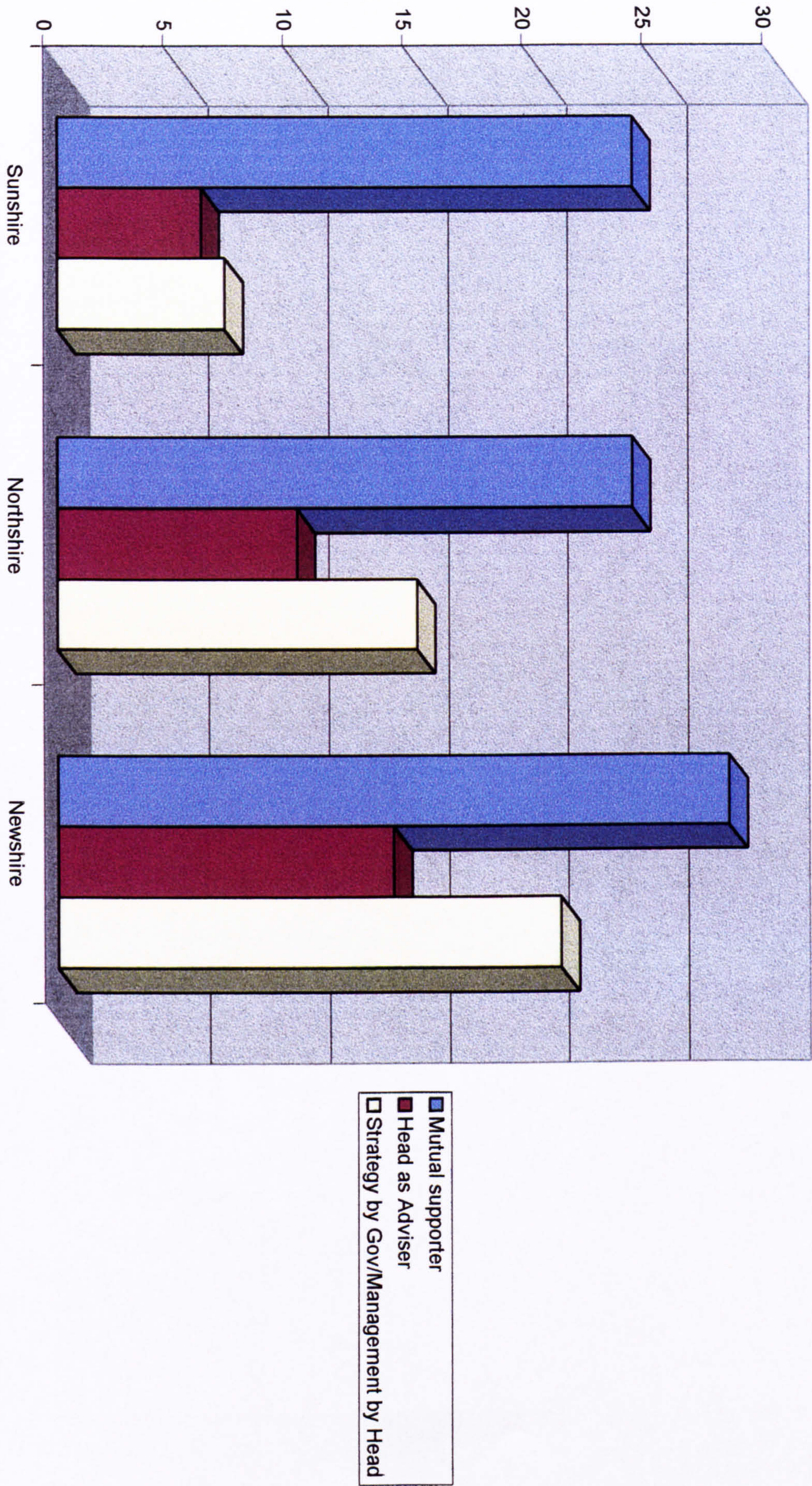
The issues of power relations and personal working relationships obviously have a part to play in Chairs' perceptions. The belief by almost 50% of the Chairs' responding that they were equal partners with the Head Teacher in governing the school is worthy of note.

## **3. Frequency of Contact between the Chair and Head Teacher**

This perception could be influenced by the frequency with which Chairs and Head Teachers met and by means by which they communicate. Figure 5.7 details the

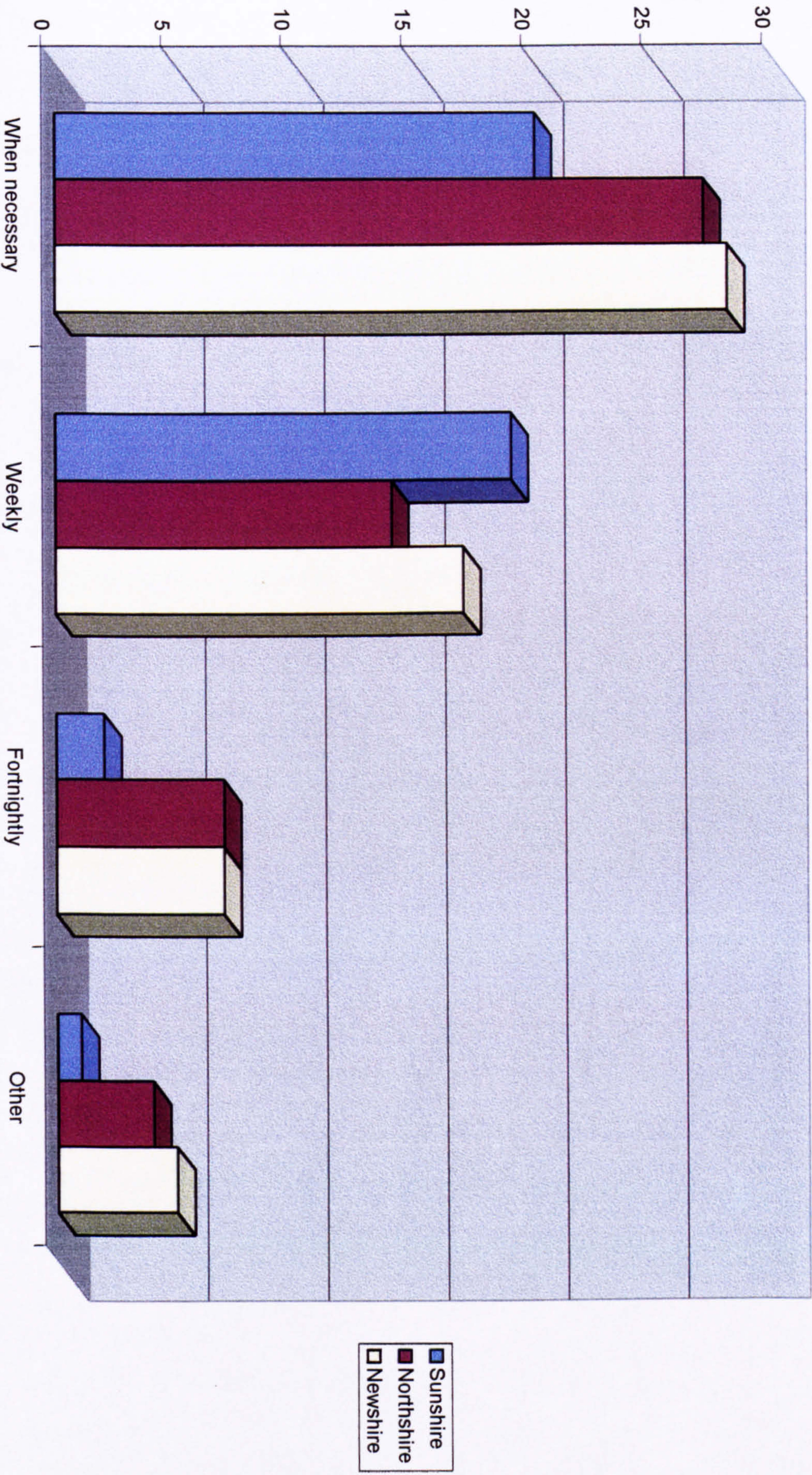


5.6 Working relationships with Head





5.7 Frequency of meetings with Head





number of responses relating to how often Chairs met with the Head Teachers of their school.

Once again, the concentration upon the ‘when necessary’ option could be interpreted as the view of the Chair not wanting access and dialogue conditioned by Head Teacher conventions. On the other hand, it may reflect the trust of the Chair in the Head Teacher to conduct the business of the school and only when an issue arises, do the Chair and Head Teacher meet.

Evidence from both the interviews with Chairs and from the diaries kept, however, tend to indicate a fairly consistent pattern of contact between Chair and Head Teacher on at least a weekly basis, if not more regular, when other forms of communication, e.g. telephone, are taken into account.

A Chair of governors of a primary school in Newshire set aside at least one and a half hours a week to meet with the Head Teacher.

“Time commitment – about one hour, an hour and a half a few times per week when I meet (with the Head Teacher) and go through all the issues related to the school, teaching issues, behaviour issues, parents and then I meet with the Vice-Chair of Governors ...”(Chair, Newshire – Interview 2)

Another Chair of a High School in Northshire had made arrangements for meeting the Head Teacher for about half an hour once a week in order to keep up to date and informed (Chair, Northshire - Interview 3).

There was a fair amount of consistency around the ‘weekly’ schedule’.

“I commit myself to going into school at least one day per week and most times I achieve that. If I can’t achieve it we always speak on the telephone ... I admit that it was easier when I actually had children at the school that I could actually keep up with what was happening regardless, but that is not the case now so it actually has to be a conscious effort to actually go in and I find in recent terms it has also been much more of a business thing of going in and dealing with things that have to be dealt with.” (Chair, Newshire – Interview 1).

Esp and Saran (1995) reported similar findings in their interviews between Head Teachers and Chairs with one Chair and Head (Case Study E p 59)



meeting once per week for half an hour and another Chair visiting on a more regular basis;

“The role of Chair is person-related. The present Chair was thrown into dealing with redundancies and the grant-maintained issue. She debates issues with staff and governors, a new experience. She was elected unopposed, willing to work. In one month, she came into school 24 times”. (Head Teacher Case Study F p63)

In making contact with the Head Teacher, Chairs were asked how they normally communicated; by telephone; by letter; by just dropping in or by making an appointment? The purpose of this area of questioning was to determine not only the means but whether, through diary entries, these forms of communication increased or not the frequency of contact beyond a weekly or fortnightly meeting.

In the questionnaire survey asking Chairs to put in priority order the four forms listed above, 51% indicated they communicated by telephone, 28% by just dropping in, 19% by pre-arranged appointment and only 2% communicated by letter.

Diarist 2 illustrated this by making or receiving telephone calls eight times in one week lasting a total of approximately 55 minutes in addition to calls in the same week to four governors. Diarist 3 made two calls to the school at which she was Chair to speak to the Head teacher lasting 45 minutes.

Clearly then, the frequency of contact with the Head Teacher is considerable both in terms of meeting, but also in frequency of other forms of contact. This is an issue to which Grace (1995) referred to in his analysis of responses from Head Teachers who felt that the time spent on governing body business with the Chair had grown dramatically.

#### **4. Incidence of Tension in Chair – Head Teacher Relationships**

Given the increased contact time and frequency of contact between Chairs and Head Teachers, was there any evidence of tension points in the relationship or in the interpretation or implementation of policies?

In terms of relationships, Figure 5.8 (N = 168) shows that 35% of Chairs found that lack of information from the Head Teacher had or could have caused tension whilst 36% felt that lack of time to discuss matters with the Head had or could have caused tension.

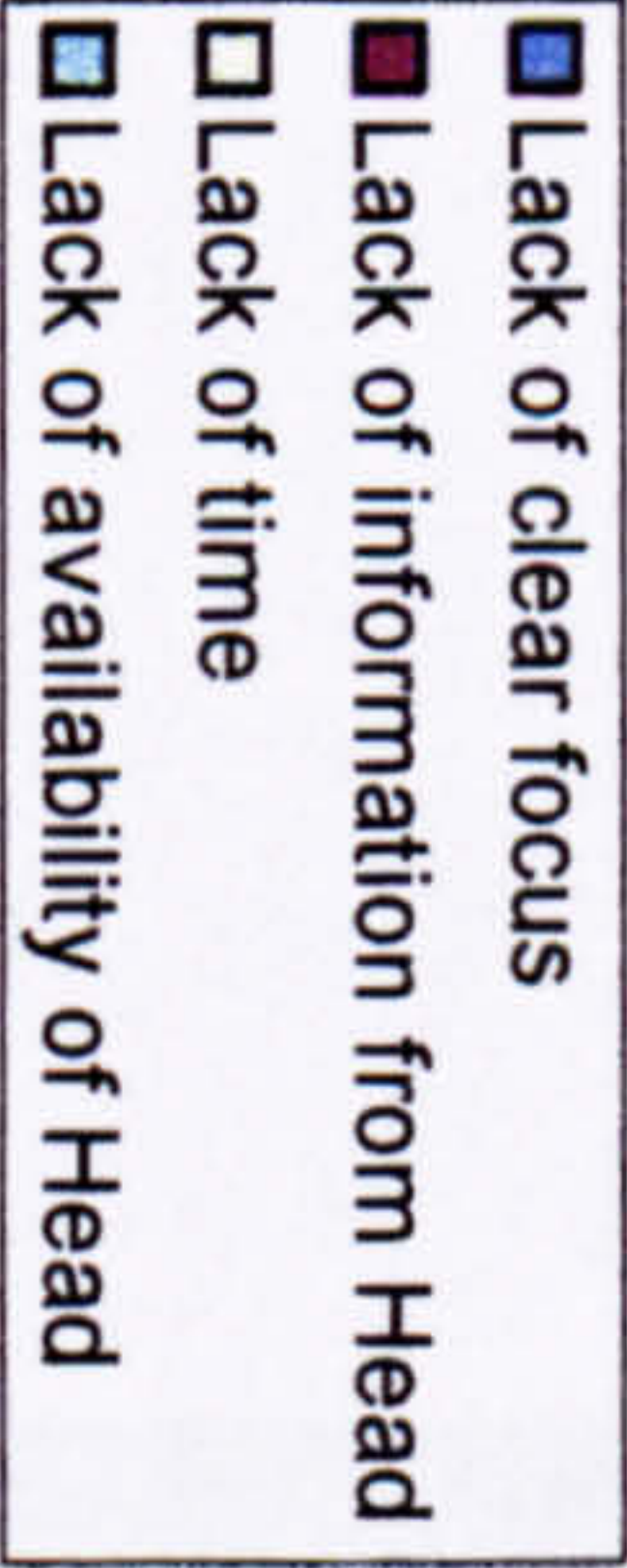
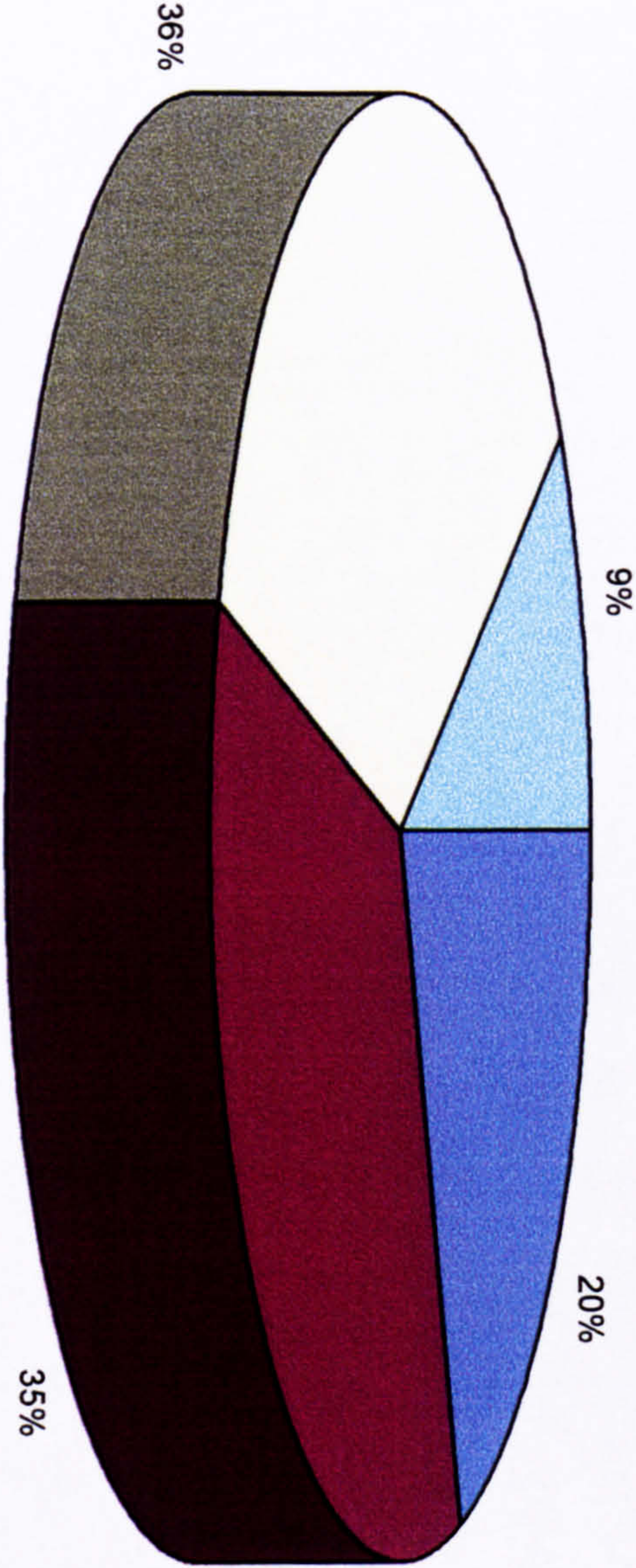
[NB 19 of these responses indicated that the factors listed may cause tension but had not in their particular case. These have been included in this data].

There was little significant variation between the LEAs other than Sunshire on ‘Lack of information’ (to lesser extent) and ‘Lack of focus’ (to greater extent). The reasons for this are not clear given that 85% of Chairs in Sunshire, in responding to questions in the survey on ‘information flow and requirements’, felt that the information from Head Teachers was sufficient compared with 85% from Newshire and 77% from Northshire. At the same time, Sunshire has the greatest incidence of Head Teachers reports being tabled at meetings, 32% as opposed to 20% for Northshire and 12% for Newshire.

If there was actual and potential tension in the Chair-Head Teacher relationships, was this manifested in policy making? Figure 5.9 illustrates the fact that whilst some tension did exist over certain policy areas, the tension points were not as high as might have been expected given the cumulative changes that had taken place in the area of school governance. In terms of policies, financial/budget issues rank the highest with 31% of the responses across all three LEAs. identifying tension points.

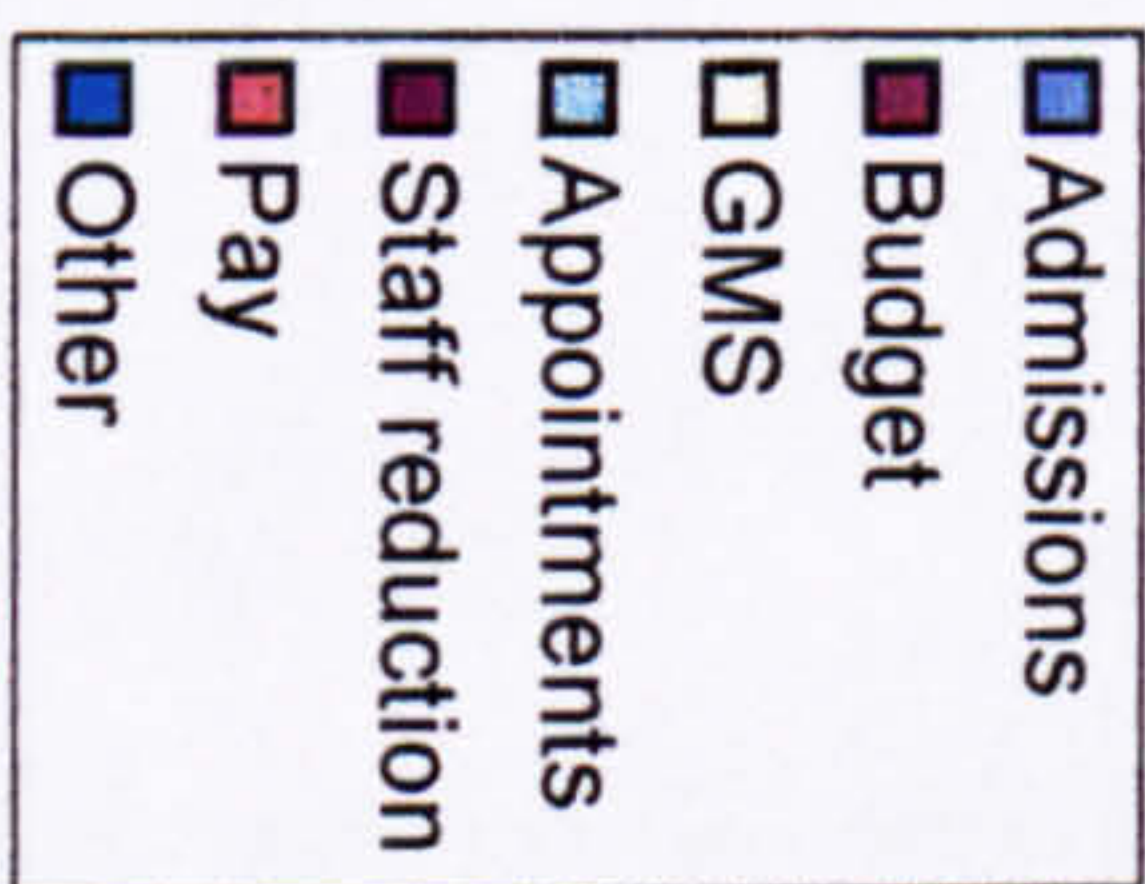
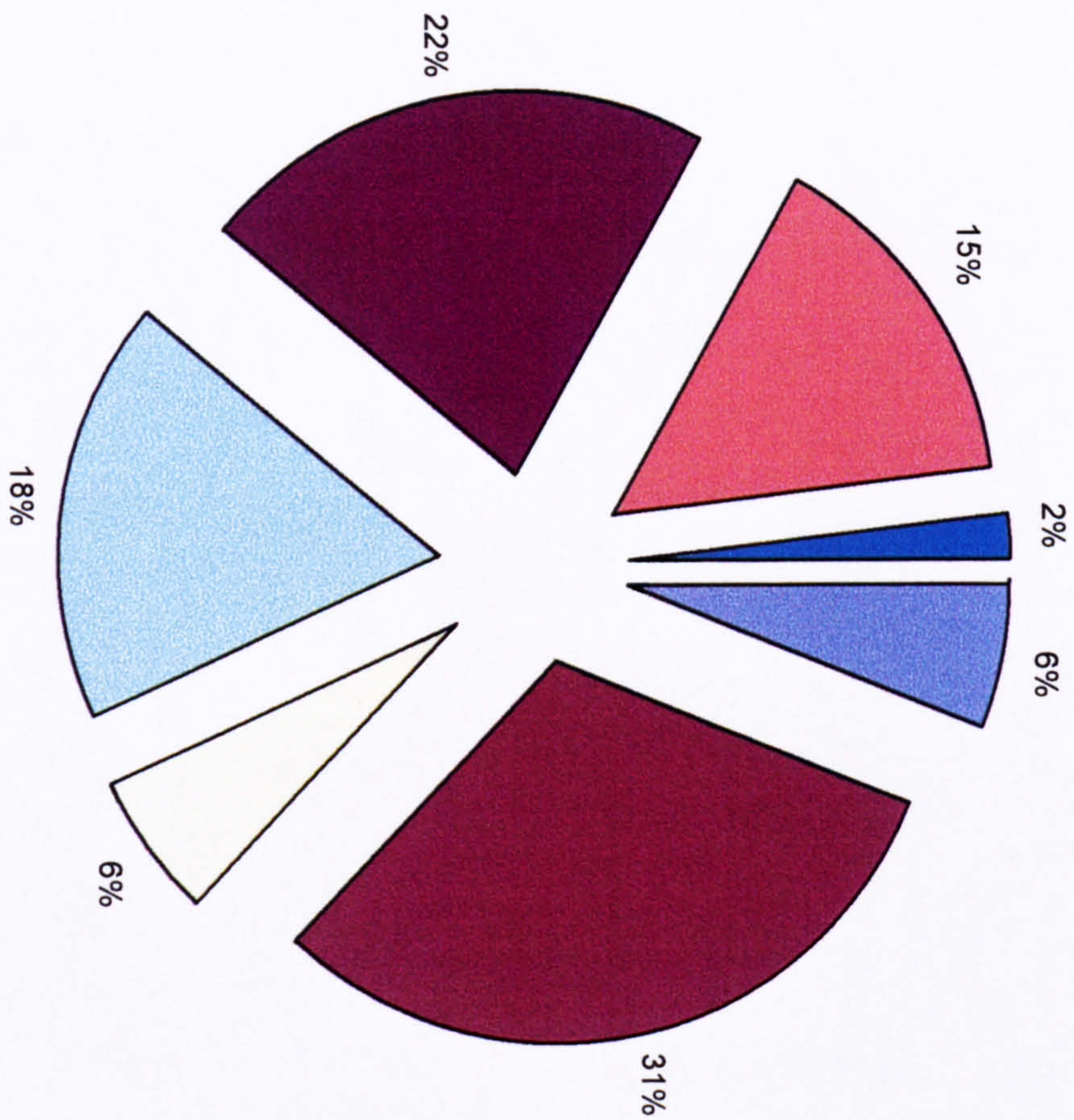


5.8 Incidence of Tension in Relationship with Head





### 5.9 Incidence of Tension in Policy Areas





“With tight budgets, I feel that the Head Teacher has already made decisions by the time we meet”. (Female Chair of Secondary School in Sunshire)

“One member of staff appears to be given greater flexibility with budgets set for departments. When questions are asked [of the Head Teacher], he is defensive. (Female Chair of JMI School in Northshire)” (24)

“As a member of the Finance Sub-Committee and as Chair, I have always though it prudent to maintain adequate contingencies. In times of declining budgets, this has caused conflict with the Head Teacher’s desire to retain staff both for the benefit of the children and staff morale”. (Male Chair of a First School in Newshire) (32)

Policies relating to staffing matters in general were identified as a ‘group’ that had caused some tension, with reductions in the staffing complement of the school ranking highest, followed by staffing appointments next and then issues relating to pay policy. In total, this group accounted for 55% of these responses.

“There was a conflict of loyalty between a long serving member of staff and the educational needs of the school when considering reductions”.  
[Male Chair of a High School in Northshire]

“There was governors concern over the quality of staff. Governors views of staff were not the same as the Head Teachers”. [Male Chair of a JMI School in Sunshire].

“Tension was caused by the Head Teacher not keeping to our strategic view over staff appointments” [Male Chair of an aided primary school in Northshire]

Policies relating to school staff and Head Teacher pay also caused some tension, but not as much as may have been expected given the exercising of recent powers by governing bodies over decisions on Head Teacher’s and teachers pay. 15% of Chairs had experienced some tension with Head Teachers in this area.

“Tension arose over whether to give one point to three teachers – late entrants into teaching – an experience point or a responsibility point”  
[Male Chair of a primary maintained school in Sunshire].

“Tension was there in discussing with the Head Teacher and Deputy Head Teacher what approach we should take to pay review”.

[Male Chair of a primary maintained school – Northshire] (37)

Of all the policies which the governing body needed to take into account in the governance of the school, only one was imposed upon schools at a national level which, it could be argued, reflected an ideological perspective. This was grant maintained status. Under the banner of ‘choice and diversity’; school governing bodies were required, on an annual basis, to consider the issue of grant maintained status. Was this to prove a breeding ground for Chair – Head Teacher tension?

“There is no tension now, but grant maintained status caused the resignation of the previous Chair”

[Male Chair of primary maintained school in Northshire] (43)

“There was an experience with the previous Head Teacher who was pro – GMS – the Governing Body was split”.

[Male Chair of a primary maintained school in Newshire ] (5)

Where tension existed, therefore, the evidence from the questionnaire responses show that it stemmed from the relationships between Chair and Head primarily and that particular policies exacerbated already existing tensions.

“The Head Teacher generally likes to make decisions and expects the Governing Body to approve them. Alternatively, partial approval of proposals is interpreted as blanket approval. There is tension at the margins of accountability/interference” (Male Chair of a primary maintained school in Newshire) (36)

“The Head Teacher has her own (sometimes hidden) agenda. She is very forceful and strategic in her ambitions. She finds it hard to accept anything other than her views.”

(Female Chair of a primary maintained school in Newshire) (45).

“My initial thoughts being challenged by Head Teacher without a thought that I might have a view which was valuable.”

(Female Chair of primary maintained school and secondary school in Northshire) (2)

“I fell alone in making decisions – the Head Teacher sits on the fence”.

(Female Chair of a secondary maintained school in Sunshire) (26)



This was further evidenced in part when, of the 30% of the Chairs responding to a question as whether they felt overwhelmed by the Head Teacher, 7% felt that they felt overwhelmed by the Head Teacher, 11% were influenced against their better judgement and 12% had lacked a clear purpose in their relationship with the Head Teacher .

Nevertheless, the picture emerging in terms of Chair – Head Teacher relationship is that, in general, they were positive, based upon a willingness to work together and to try and solve the differences. When Chairs were asked if they felt they had ‘overstepped the mark’ in their working relationship with the Head Teacher, only 6% identified instances where this had happened.

“The governors made a decision against the decision of the Head Teacher. The Head Teacher was angry and decided to communicate in writing only for 6 months”. (Female Chair of comprehensive school in Northshire) (26)

When Chairs were asked if they felt Head Teachers had ‘overstepped the mark’, they were a little more forthcoming with 14.5% identifying instances.

“A very difficult issue arose over a new member of staff whose performance was poor. Parents were very worried. All concerned agreed something had to be done. The Head Teacher questioned our ability to judge a teacher and question her professionalism, even though agreeing that things were not right.” (Male Chair of a primary maintained school in Sunshire) (33)

“This was over an important staff appointment where the wording of the advert, discussed and agreed by the governors, was changed by the Head Teacher as it was not what she wanted.” (Female Chair of primary maintained school in Newshire) (45)

When asked to reflect upon their relationship with the Head Teacher in terms of a graded attitude scale from “Difficult” to “Very Positive”, the response rate mirrored the general findings from other aspects.

As can be seen from the figure 5.10 (N : 153), 93% of Chairs found their overall relationship sound or better with 72% finding that relationship very positive.

This last observation puts this important relationship into perspective.

The role of the Chair is crucial to this “working out” of difficulties and the evidence suggests, almost by default, in that there is no overwhelming evidence to the contrary, that in most instances, local tension points and difficulties can be and are overcome.

Scanlon et al (1999) also reported on the nature of Chair – Head Teacher relationships and their results were very positive with most respondents (99% of Chairs and 94% of Head Teachers) giving the ‘head/chair relationship’ a rating of three or four (ie helpful or productive). The authors noted, however, in the particular area as well as in other areas of Chair-Head Teacher relationships, that

“...there does seem to be a general trend throughout the research whereby Chairs respond in a more positive way than Head Teachers”. (p 55)

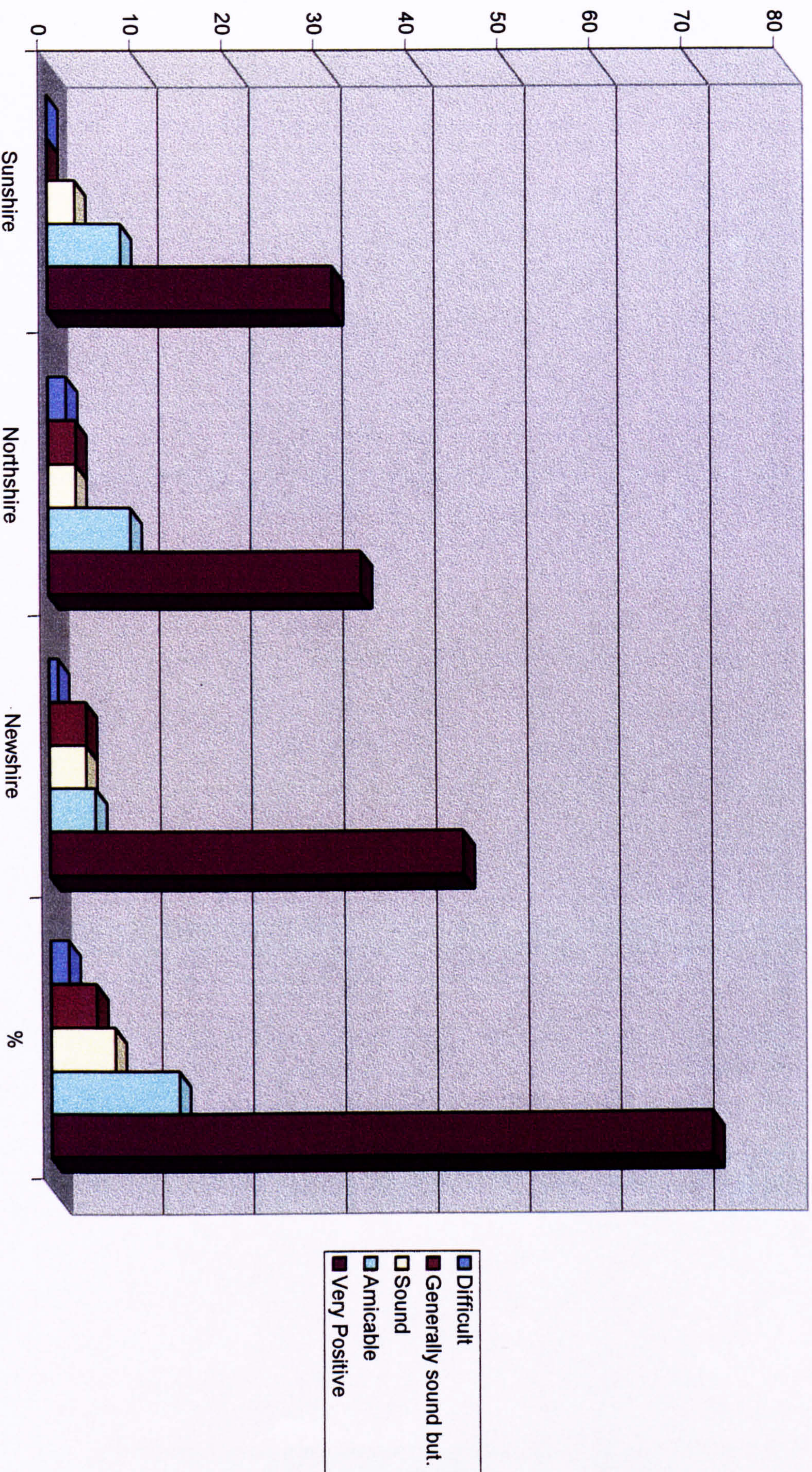
This is an interesting observation to note for a number of reasons in relation to this study. Firstly, the perception of the Chairs’ role vis a vis the Head Teacher, held by almost 50% of Chairs, that they are in equal footing with the Head Teacher.

Secondly, the promotion of the role of the Chair as a significant player in the area of school governance as illustrated by reference to education legislation through the years since the 1986 Education Act (No 2).

Is this perception one which is promulgated and then re-inforced by government initiatives alone or is it backed up by evidence also? Through the analysis of data so far, it appears that Chairs do see themselves as key players in Chair-Head Teacher relationships, in fostering good relationships and in including other governors in the work of the governing body.



### 5.10. Chair - Head Teacher relationships





## **D. The relationship between the Chair and the governing body.**

### **1. Context**

This area of the research was aimed at exploring Chairs' perceptions of their role in relation to the governing body as a whole and to seek their views on matters of governor participation.

Deem et al (1995), in addressing the issues of citizenship and participation, focussed upon the particular role of the Chair.

“In the case study, all chairs of governors were ...highly active. Because of the de facto powers the chairs hold (although legally little may be delegated to the chair) and because of the subsequent work this entails, they generally stand out from other members in the core of activists. In relative terms, chairs of governors tend to be hyper-activists who correspond closest among all the governors to the archetypal active citizen” (p 57)

Recognising this and recognising, from this present study, the perceptions of Chairs as in an equal footing with Head Teachers, together with the time spent in consultation and meetings with the Head Teacher, the Chair ought to be well placed to assess their relationship with the governing body.

Esp and Saran (1995) also comment upon this aspect;

“If governors are to be encouraged to participate they need opportunities to serve on smaller committees. ... Apart from the need to spread the enormous load, there is also the need to extend empowerment beyond the head and chair, who can easily become isolated from the main body of governors and staff.”  
(p 77)



The danger of ‘differential levels of governor’ or ‘two tier’ governing bodies was raised by Scanlon et al (1999) in their concluding observations.

“The chair needs to be able to build a good relationship with the head, while at the same time enabling other governors to play key roles in the work of the governing body .... However the chairs of governing bodies in our case study schools emphasised the importance of involving all governors in the work and decision making of the team, so as not to create a ‘two tier’ governing body (p 63).

## **2. Chairs relationships with the governing bodies**

How then did Chairs perceive their relationship with their governing bodies and how did they encourage involvement? Figure 5.11 illustrates the results from a question put to Chairs about their relations with their governing bodies based on four statements; harmonious, generally sound with occasional difficulties; satisfying and could do better.

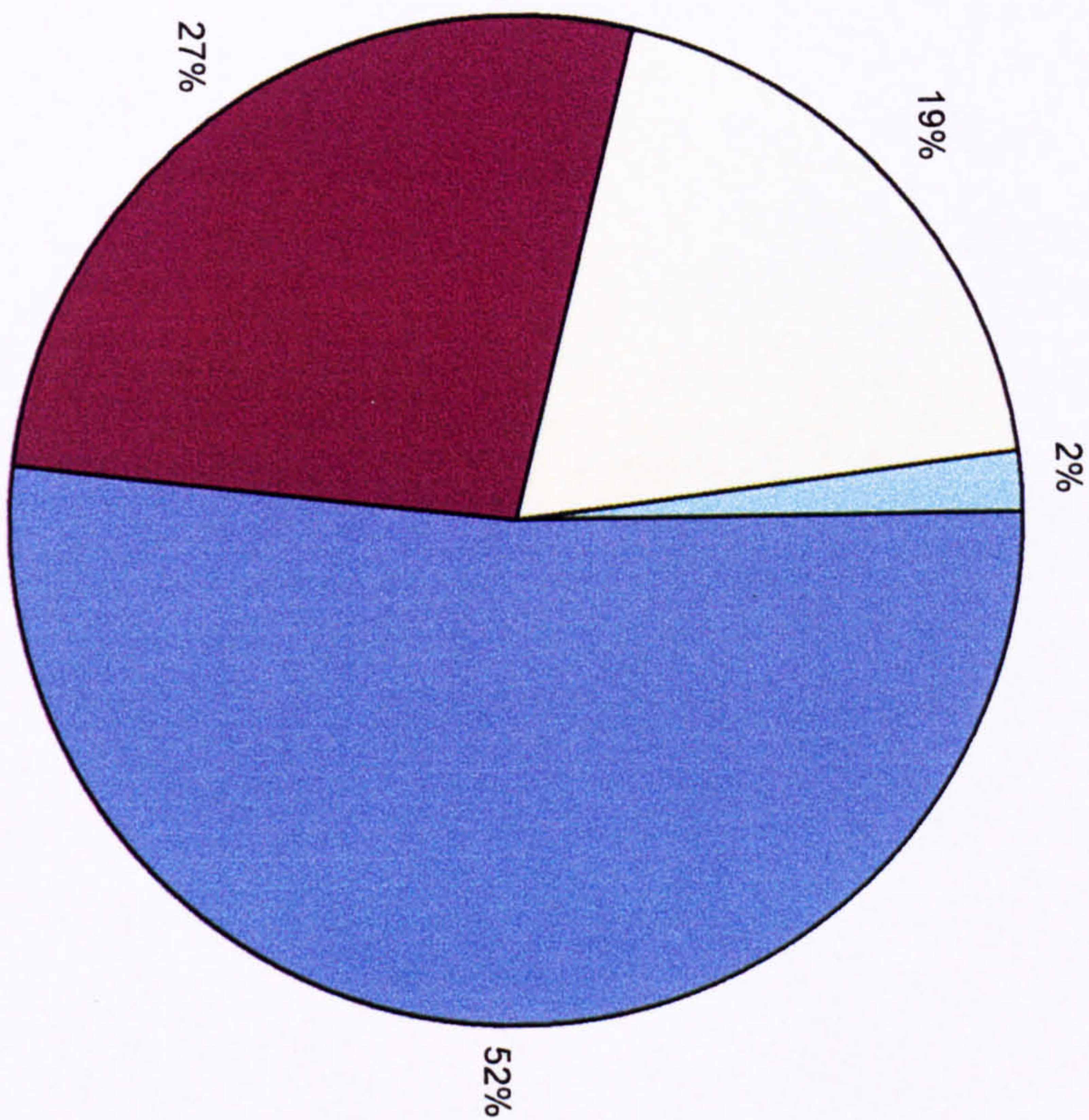
As can be seen from figure 5.11 (N = 133), 52% believed that there was a harmonious relationship with the governing body, 27% believed that they were generally good with some occasional difficulties and 19% were satisfying relationships on the whole. Only 2% felt that the position could be better.

Clearly, such a response rate indicates a high level of agreement in Chairs’ perceptions of relationships with the governing body. There was little variation between LEAs in the overall picture but minor differences appeared in certain elements. Whilst 60% of Chairs in Sunshire felt their relationships were harmonious, the figure for Newshire was 49%. Yet 39% of Chairs of Sunshire rated the relationship as very satisfactory whereas in Newshire, the figure was only 14%.

From the interviews, however, a less clear picture emerges. One Chair, a male from a secondary school in Newshire, commented upon the Chair-governor relationship.



5.11 Relationships with Governing Body



■ Harmonious ■ Good with some problems □ Satisfying □ Could do better



“Difficult. We have two Vice-Chairs now and I have got to say that I don’t consult with them at all really. One of them is not very active at all and barely comes to meetings. The other one is very active but only in certain areas; he’s just very interested in premises and things to do with Health and Safety and I tend to not work with them very closely. I think there is a lack of trust there. No problems but I don’t trust his judgement very much, but no difficulty with other governors. (Chair, Newshire - Interview 4)

A second observation, from a male chair from Newshire on the nature of relationships, highlights the political dimension.

“Quite good, I would like to think they were quite good. I do have a slight difference with ... probably one. I am not 100% sure, there was a clash of personalities, over political views ... the Lib Dem councillor was a governor, however, er um, challenged a vacancy which I don’t think shall lead to difficulties but does tend to.” (Chair, Newshire - Interview 2)

The generally positive view of Chair and governor relationships from the questionnaire data, when analysed through the interviews, whilst not being undermined, is slightly more critically viewed.

The observations of one Chair of a maintained primary school illustrate the lengths to which a Chair will go to ensure the fostering of good relationships and participation.

“I think what is expected of Chairpersons is so enormous that to expect people who are, in the main, lay people, to understand it and deal with it and act properly is ridiculous. Absolutely ridiculous. I think I try to maintain a friendly relationship with all of the governors but I recognise that I have, with the Vice-Chairman, we sometimes have authority to make decisions but only sometimes so it is very important never to move outside the remit that has been set by the governors ... Sometimes you have to use your perception of how governors are to try and move meetings along, it is very difficult I think for sometimes parent governors and even teacher governors to raise issues that it might be actually a little bit controversial ... So sometimes you have to sort of put yourself up as an ally if you like and I will always ask questions that I perfectly know the answer to but I know others don’t.” (Interview 5)

This Chair was obviously conscious of the range of governors and took pro-active steps to involve and encourage participation.

### **3. Encouraging Participation**

What other mechanisms did Chairs use to encourage participation? It can be seen from Figure 5.12 (N = 133) that Chairs identified with a number of strategies to encourage participation with the 'membership of committees' and 'encouraging discussion' used most. The adoption of more sophisticated strategies of enhanced 'governor links' and 'individual governor responsibility' are used to a lesser extent. There was little variation across each of the three LEAs.

Scanlon et al's (1999) findings on the membership of various subgroups and committees are not too dissimilar with this study's finding in relation to the Chairs' role. Scanlon et al's research reported that 99.8% of Chairs had created committees (p 54). In this present study, 95% (127) of Chairs reported that they encouraged participation through the membership of committees and it was reported earlier in this chapter that 59% of Chairs of governing bodies also acted as Chairs of committees. However, where a difference did emerge was in Scanlon et al's findings of the governors role in other areas. Scanlon et al reported that 83% of Chairs indicated that they set up working groups looking at particular issues and 95% assigned responsibilities for particular issues to governors.

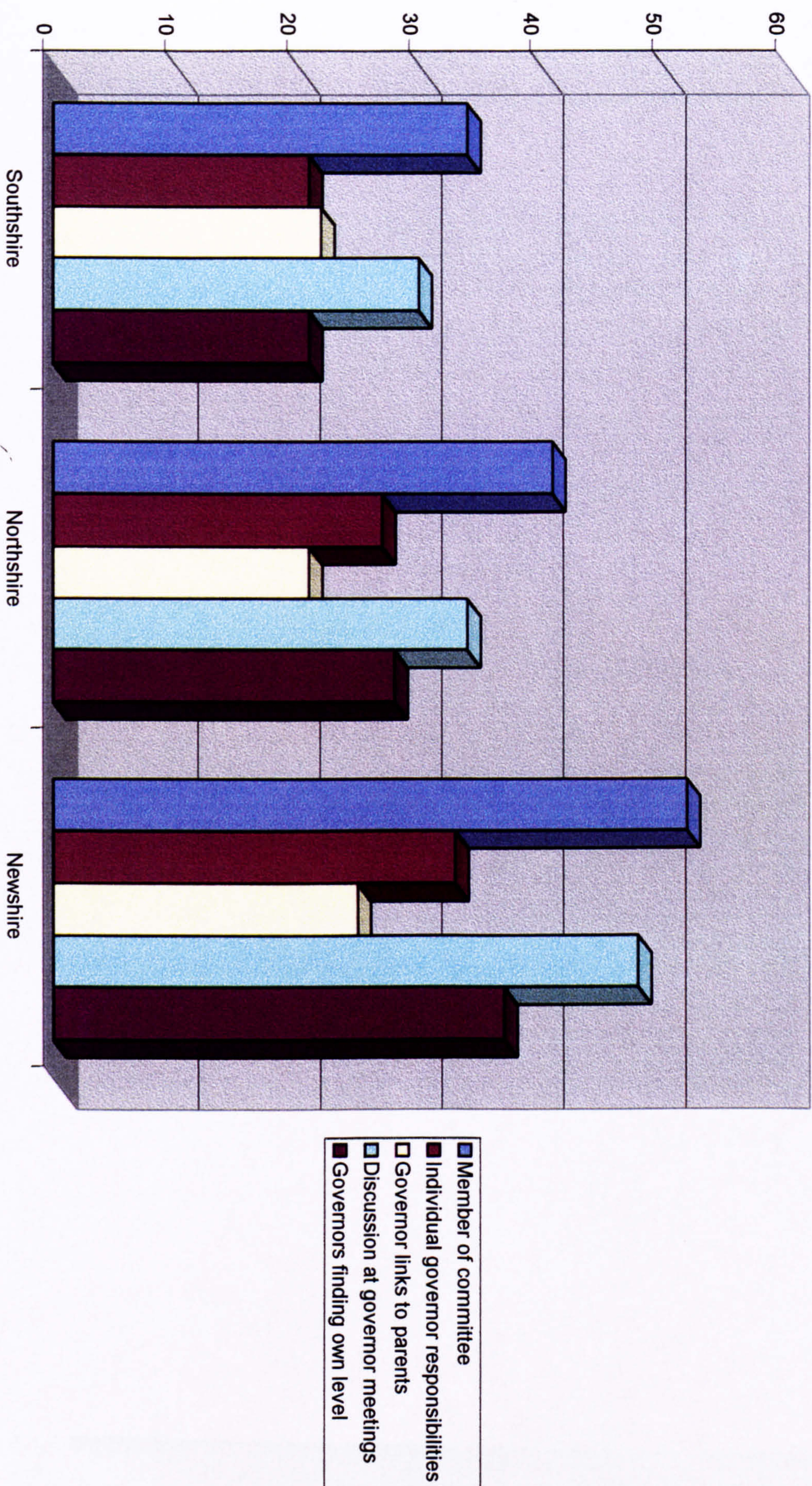
In this present study, Chairs perceptions were rather different. 60% (81) of Chairs indicated that participation was encouraged through allocating individual responsibilities whilst 51% (68) of Chairs encouraged governor links to different parts of the school.

Scanlon et al's study illustrates the potential divide in perceptions of participation.

When governors were asked about membership of various subgroups and committees, only 35% of governors felt that they were members of working groups looking at particular issues and 37% of governors were assigned responsibility for particular issues. Clearly therefore, there is a difference in perception between Chairs' view and governor views as to level of participation.



### 5.12. Encouraging governors to participate





Why this should be so is not immediately clear. One reason may be that the Chair’s involvement in the organising of governing body business and the range of connections with the Head Teacher, staff and other governors that the Chair is required to make, may have led Chairs to believe that participation is greater than it is. A further reason may lie in what Deem et al (1995) called the ‘core of activists’. By this, Chairs impressions of participation are coloured by the relative activity of a few governors who may volunteer for a number of working parties and linked responsibilities yet the greater number remain “at the edge of involvement”.

**4.      Chairs Description of the Role of their Governing Body**

The reality of Chairs’ perceptions of relationships and participation was tested in their assessment of where the strong points and weak points of their governing body lay.

**5.13      Chairs’ description of the state of their Governing Body**

	Sunshire (n = 36)	Northshire (n = 43)	Newshire (n = 55)	N	%
(a) Effectively Conducts Business	30	29	36	95	75%
Some Areas Still to be Looked at	6	10	15	31	25%
(b) All Governors are FullyAware	8	12	16	36	29%
Some Governors More Aware Than Others	25	25	38	88	71%
(c) Governing Body Acts Like a Team	22	27	34	83	70%
Divisions Exist in Governing Body	10	12	14	36	30%
(d) All Governors Make Equal Contributions	6	10	12	28	22%
Some Governors are More Active	28	32	40	100	78%



From Figure 5.13, it can be seen that, in terms of awareness (b), 71% of the responses across the three LEAs indicated a differentiation in awareness amongst governors whilst 78% of Chairs believed that some governors were more active than others (d). 75% of Chairs felt that relationships and participation were strong in the effective conduct of business (a) and 70% of Chairs felt that the governing body acted as a team (c).

There were no noticeable variations across the three LEAs. Indeed, there was a marked similarity of response in all areas from each of the three LEAs with only one variation in Sunshire's response to "effective conduct of business".

The perception of Chairs with regard to effective conduct of business and teamwork has to be seen in the context of the analysis to responses to problems they faced with the governors in their role as Chair.

Figure 5.14 illustrates the pattern of the 89 responses to this question relating to problems. 24% of Chairs across the three LEAs identified problems with the timing of meetings and 21% of Chairs with the conduct of meetings.

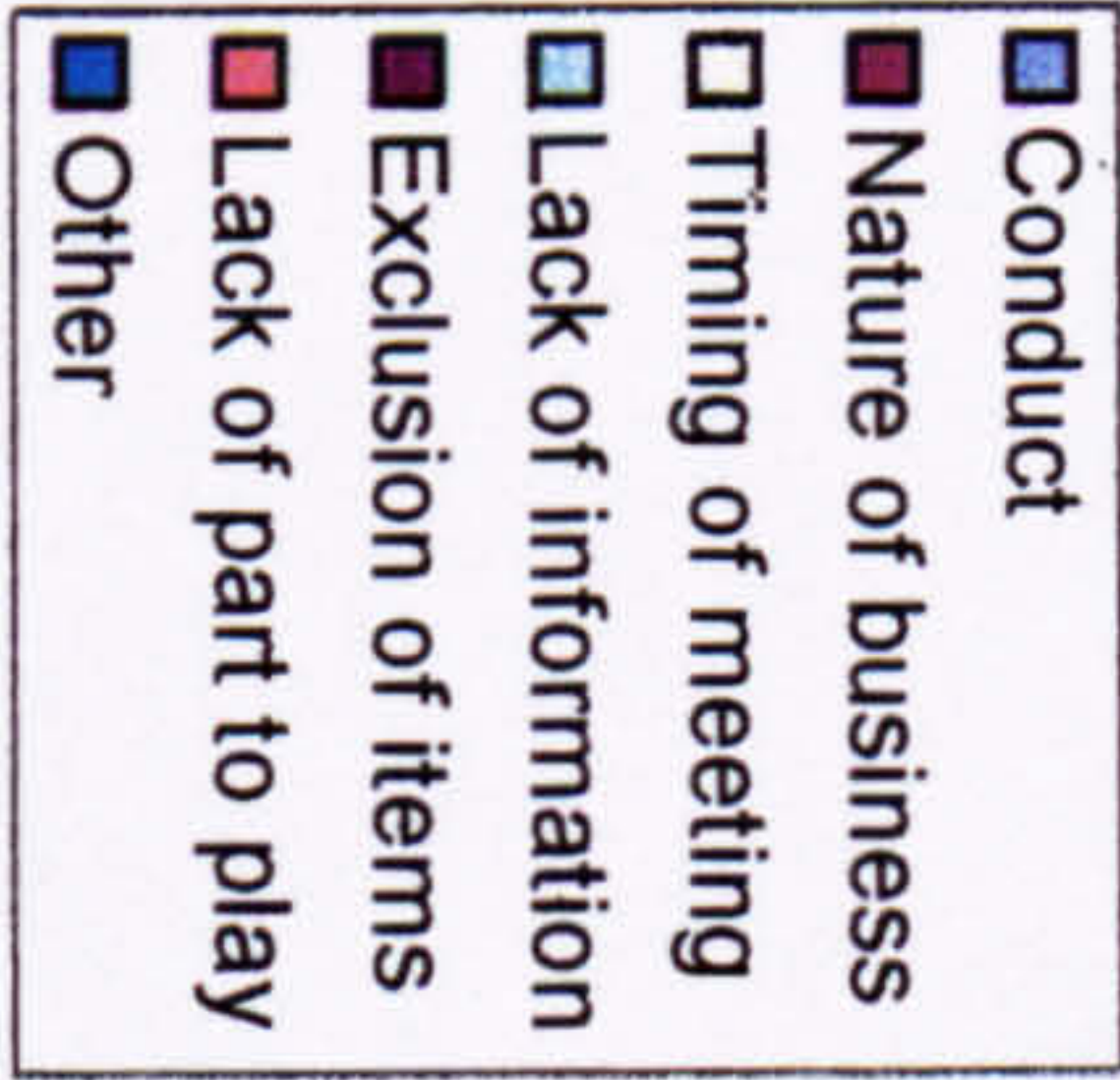
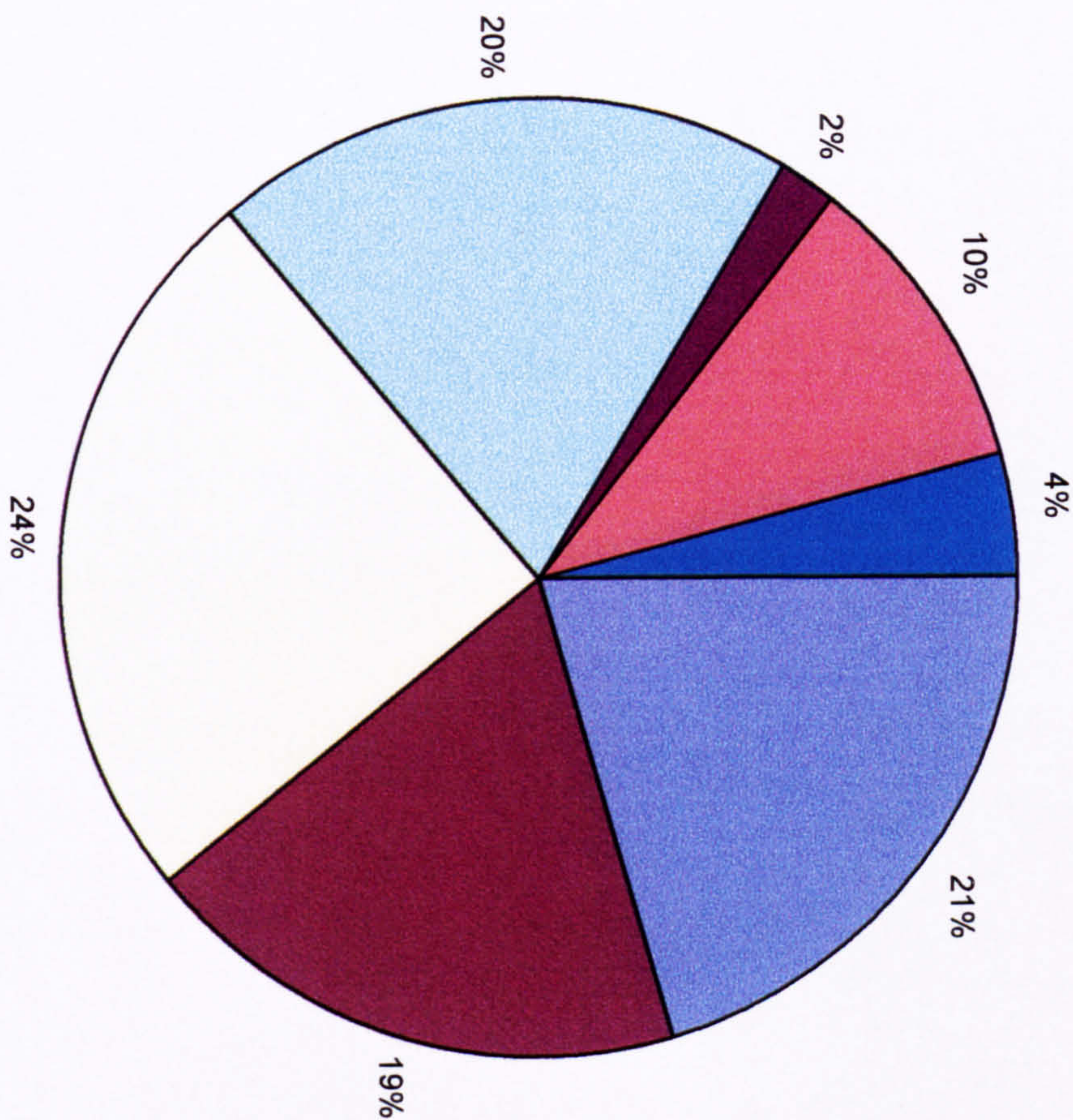
Chairs faced problems in 'timing' such as 'the agenda was too long' (Northshire 2); 'it is difficult to identify a time suitable to everyone' (Newshire 8); 'the time for consideration is too short' (Southshire 51); 'it is difficult to fit in sub-committees.' (Newshire 55).

Problems under 'conduct of business' were similar in variety; "the meeting is more influenced by Head than by Chair", (Northshire 24); "people not read papers for the meeting" (Northshire 38); "governors talk too much (Northshire 22, Newshire 57, 42)); "Governor friends gang up to promote self-interest ---" (Newshire 48).

Clearly therefore, whilst the majority of Chairs felt that, in the conduct of business and in teamwork, they worked well, problems did exist in those areas which caused them some concern. These concerns do not appear to be unique to any one LEA.



5.14 Problems faced by Chairs with Governing Bodies





Indeed, if the responses relating to 'items of business' were to be bracketed together, it would include the nature of business item (18%), the lack of information on an item (19%) and the exclusion of an item (2%). Esp and Saran (1995) also commented upon this situation in an extract from a Case Study (D)

"Governor morale also has its problems. 'Some don't know how to perform their role .' There is governor training but only some take it up. When some complained about the head teacher, the chair publicly supported the head, privately told him to 'get this sorted'. Teamwork underpins this partnership'.  
(p57)

## **E. The Chair and the effectiveness of the governing body**

### **1. Context**

This element of the research attempted to examine Chairs' views on the effectiveness of their governing bodies or otherwise. As such, Chairs were asked to identify effective and non-effective areas of operation and instruments of measurement of effectiveness which were used in their own situations.

School effectiveness research has, in the past, concentrated quite rightly upon what factors contribute to making a school an 'effective school'. The work of Reynolds (1992), Creemers (1994), Fitzgibbon (1996) and Gray et al (1996) are amongst a few who have attempted to identify the key characteristics of school effectiveness, ranging from the quality of school leadership provided by the Head Teacher, through a shared vision of all concerned, down to the effect of individual departments and to individual classroom activity in effective learning. There is now a significant body of research on this subject to the extent that, at the present time of writing, that influence has reached Government circles with the creation of a School Standard and Effectiveness Unit within the educational hierarchy of the DfEE.

The point to be noted here, however, is the place of the school governing body in contributing to school effectiveness. In comparison to other factors, little has been written on this aspect. This is not surprising. School governing bodies are not in the forefront of having a ‘significant effect’ on learning in the classroom. More attributable factors are the quality of teaching, the learning resources, the motivation of pupils, the classroom environment, the role of the Head Teacher amongst others. These factors tend to be at the ‘chalk face’. These factors can directly effect learning, therefore, the effectiveness of the school. The role of the school governing body is, it can be argued, more of a contextual influence. Creemers (1992) identified the need for a theoretical re-conceptualisation of the idea of school effectiveness.

“Attention to instructional effectiveness at the school level is important because it encourages teachers to be effective. At the school level, a situation can be created in which effective instruction is supported, stimulated or even elicited. These components and factors at the school level do not create the instructional process, but are conditional for the performance of teachers and pupils. We can look at other components around the school that can contribute to effective instruction within the classroom, like school board at the district level or even national level – at the school board level by having competent head teachers and teachers” (p 8)

Using this theoretical application, yet untested in practice, Creemers further states:

“School Boards can support school effectiveness and the effectiveness of classroom instruction ... School Boards that are more effective in this respect can increase effectiveness at the classroom level in the end, through the means of school principals, school teams and individual teachers”. (p 9)



Hofman (1995) has attempted to give greater validity to Creemer's hypothesis in his research into the role of school boards and their contextual influence on school effectiveness. He promotes the premise that effective school boards operate in the educational area (curriculum and instructional issues, test data analysis) and the personnel area (staff development, supervision of principals). In order to test the level of variance that could be explained by such boards, Hofman collected the data from 133 randomly selected Dutch school boards and one of the school's for which they were responsible, through questionnaires to school boards and teachers. The data collected also came from the testing of pupils aged 9 to 11 in primary schools using the standardised tests for arithmetic and language.

Hofman's analysis showed that, in relation to the explained variance in arithmetic achievement, this amounted to 42% amongst the four co-variables; denomination of the school (in Holland); a measure of urban density within a school area; the overall SES score of the school and the school size. With regard to language, such factors accounted for only 20% of the variance. The significant result, as far as the school boards were concerned, was that the influence of the members of the school organisation on the decision of the board accounted for 4% of the variance in relation to mathematics and 6% in relation to language. As Hofman states;

“It is quite remarkable that not so much of the degree or type of the school boards administrative control makes a difference. It is, in fact, a characteristic of the functioning of the school board that is most important. School boards that involve school teams and parents in the decision making process manage school with relatively better results in the cognitive domain” (p 12)

The purpose in identifying such research findings is to demonstrate that, in research carried out in Holland with reference to school boards and in Webster and Mundro



(1995) research findings in Dallas schools, in Texas, USA, in relation to the role of School Community Councils, an effect has been identified in terms of school effectiveness. Whilst this author acknowledges the limitations of applying such conclusions to the inquiries of the school governance system in England, such research does create a contextual setting.

Where, however, does this leave the effectiveness of the governing body in fulfilling its duties? Carrick (1996), in debating the link between effective governing bodies and effective schools states;

“Effective governance depends not only on the meanings of both terms but in the nature of the relationship between governing bodies and schools. something that is again highly problematical. For example, it is clearly possible that a school can be effective despite an ineffective governing body; is it similarly possible that a school may be ineffective despite an effective governing body”. (p 143 – 144)

Carrick does not answer his own rhetorical question as such, but he does, through reference to other research, (Earley 1994, Creese 1994, Keys and Fernades 1990) identify four reasons for the lack of effectiveness of governing bodies: the hostility of teachers and educationalists; the inappropriateness of governor training; the inherent deference of governors and the difficulty in the task given to them. (p 155)

Whilst Carrick’s concerns have to be noted, they must be seen in perspective.

## **2. Chairs Views on the Effectiveness of the Governing Body**

In the present study, reference was made to governing body effectiveness as part of the questionnaire data collection. Chairs, across all three LEAs, were asked about their perceptions of the effectiveness of the governing body. Out of the 130 responses



to the question on effectiveness, 61% of Chairs believed that the governing body was effective in carrying out all of its duties whilst 39% of Chairs felt that their governing body was more effective in some areas than in others. It is tempting to suggest that the 39% of Chairs who felt that their governing body was more effective in some areas than in others were more 'realistic' about governing body effectiveness in that the range of duties and responsibilities are so extensive, so as to make them completely effective in all may seem an impossibility. Yet Scanlon et al (1999) reported in their study, in relation to overall effectiveness of the governing body, that 94% of Chairs felt that their governing bodies were effective (61%) or very effective (33%) (p 29). The fact that this level of confidence was not shared by other Head Teachers or other governors in Scanlon's study to the same extent, is worthy of note. Is it the case therefore, that the Chair of governors has a particularly 'rosy coloured' view of their own governing body because to suggest otherwise would reflect on their role as Chair?. A less than effective governing body reflects on a less than effective Chair? It is perhaps worth exploring this point further in the light of recent OFSTED findings that up to one-third of primary and one quarter secondary school governing bodies have been judged to be lacking in effectiveness in the key areas of leadership, management and effective planning. (Chief Inspectors Annual Report 1997).

In analysing the interviews with Chairs, it is evident that there is a lack of social and professional cohesion amongst Chairs as a governor group. Whilst Head Teachers may form 'clusters' for mutual self help, there is little evidence of this happening amongst Chairs. In interview, Chairs were asked how they assessed the effectiveness of their role by reference to other governors on their governing body and by reference to other Chairs?. A number of strategies, both structured and unstructured, were used to determine the former; after meeting 'chit-chat' and continued attendance at meetings were interpreted as support. In one case, formal evaluation sheets at the end of each meeting were used. In relation to other Chairs, the picture was different.



“I have no idea about that because I have never discussed it with any other Chairman. I’ve been to various meetings, when other Chairmen were there but I’ve felt it was a bit of a cheek if you said to some other Chairman, “Well, how do you do this, that or the other”. To develop my role, I’ve naturally been on the training courses and I didn’t really feel that I have to develop the role because I’ve done it so much at work... That’s my view. I don’t know the other side of it, they’re probably saying ‘He’s a right old bugger’.”  
(Male Chair of primary school in Newshire Interview 10)

“I did speak to other colleagues that I know Chair other schools ... but I have to confess to an extent I am only really interested in whether the way that the Chairman’s role is carried out in our school is satisfactory to the needs of our school ... again, I have to confess there is not a lot of discussion with other Chairs at all.”  
(Male Chair of primary school in Northshire Interview 11)

The position with regard to assessing their own effectiveness was underlined by a Chair of governors of a primary school in Newshire.

“I think that’s one of the problems which the Chairs have that very rarely do they see or know what other Chairs of governing bodies do and how they react. I have a slight benefit in being on the governing body of another school and I can see how that Chair deals with things, but I suspect that most chairs may not know what is going on. That’s a weakness in the system and until you get over that, I would suspect, unless you actually go and sit in another governing body meeting I am not sure how you would get over that. It’s all very well meeting other Chairs of governors which doesn’t happen or appear to happen, to actually sit in the meeting which could be totally different view to the views received from other Chairs. So I think that’s probably a weakness in the whole system. We all tend to work independently”. (Chair, Primary school, Newshire – Interview 2)

If there is a lack of ‘social and professional’ cohesion amongst Chairs and there is little opportunity to exchange views, then the perceptions held by Chairs of the effectiveness of their own governing body have to be viewed with caution. With this caveat, Chairs were asked to identify what areas they felt that their own governing body were effective in and what areas needed improving.

### **3. Effective Areas of Governance**

The analysis of the data from the questionnaires on this issue proved problematical in that Chairs were simply invited to identify the areas of school governing body



effectiveness without any prompt. This rather unstructured approach resulted in a significant range of areas of effectiveness, the importance of which may have had greater significance within one LEA as opposed to another.

Nevertheless, certain trends did emerge. Overall, 84 Chairs addressed this question generating 140 responses. 29% of the Chairs listed Budget/Finance and 19% of Chairs listed Staffing related matters whilst 14% of Chairs felt that their support for the Head Teacher and senior management were areas where they felt the governing body was effective. Other areas that were mentioned but not to such an extent included the work of committees (8%), involvement in policy and decision making (9%) and School Development Planning (12%). There were variations between LEAs noted in this area. For instance, in relation to Budget/Finance matters, 25% of Chairs from Sunshire ranked this issue of significance but 50% of Chairs did so in Newshire. In relation to staffing matters, just over 12% of Chairs in Sunshire felt that this was an effective area of operation yet 30% did so in Newshire. Why such differences occurred between LEAs was not followed up rigorously as part of this research. However, the author's knowledge of the LEAs and the structure of their service delivery to schools leads to one possible explanation being the higher profile and more easily recognisable service delivery (through identifiable, negotiated service level agreements) of finance and staffing services in Newshire. As such, Chairs may have used this in their own assumptions about effectiveness given the close relationship of such services to the LEA.

## **2. Areas for Improvement**

When Chairs were asked to identify areas for improvement within the business of the governing body, there was a similar expansive range of responses. 79 Chairs produced 93 responses, some 30% less than in the 'effectiveness' responses.



In general terms, 35% of Chairs felt that there was room for improvement in what can be called “communication/participation/involvement/knowledge areas”.

Whilst 30% identified ‘subject specific areas’ such as the ‘curriculum’ (14%), Budget/Finance (5%), legal responsibilities (6%) amongst others, the more ‘strategic’ issues such as ‘policy development’ and ‘School Development Planning’ were identified by only 7% of Chairs. The governors’ role in ‘target setting’ and ‘monitoring and evaluation’ were identified by only 2% of the Chairs.

Put together, the findings in relation to ‘effective’ and ‘ineffective’ areas as identified by Chairs present a perplexing picture. Whether it was ‘effectiveness’ or ‘ineffectiveness’, Chairs tended to view them both within the same broad categorical approach. The areas of most effectiveness, “Budget/Finance” and “Staffing” are the ‘structural’ areas mirroring largely the well-established delineation of committees.

Within the ineffective areas, ‘curriculum’ also comes under this structural approach.

When the areas of improvement are considered, it is the ‘inter-personal organisational’ areas which are primarily identified, such as ‘communication’, ‘participation’ and ‘contact with staff’.

What is noticeable – and perplexing – is the absence, to any significant degree, of the ‘strategic’ areas of governor activity from both categories of ‘effective’ and ‘ineffective’. Given that, in accordance with recent thinking from the DfEE and the Audit Commission, the thrust of the role of the governing body should be determined by the three – pronged approach of ‘strategic planning’, ‘accountability’ and ‘being a critical friend’, then none of these appeared in the taxonomy of the Chairs responding to any to any noticeable degree.

The importance of this absence is contextualised by reference to the Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Schools for 1997/98. In relation to primary school governing bodies, the Report noted.



“In just over one third of schools, governors were influential in setting aims and targets for the school and monitoring progress towards them. By contrast, in one quarter of schools, governors were poorly placed to know about and influence the education provided”. (p 29)

In relation to secondary schools, the Report noted;

“Governors are influential in setting targets, identifying priorities and monitoring and evaluating progress in about half of schools ..... Overall, governors have insufficient influence in one in five schools. The proportion of ineffective governing bodies is five times higher in disadvantaged areas than in advantaged ones.

Those schools which face the greatest challenges and where the need to raise standards is highest, are those most likely to lack the strategic support they need”. (p 41)

Clearly, therefore, there is a mismatch between the perceptions of Chairs as to effectiveness and the views of OFSTED, largely related to the ‘strategic level’ of setting targets, identifying priorities and monitoring and evaluating progress.

### **3. Measurement of Governor Effectiveness**

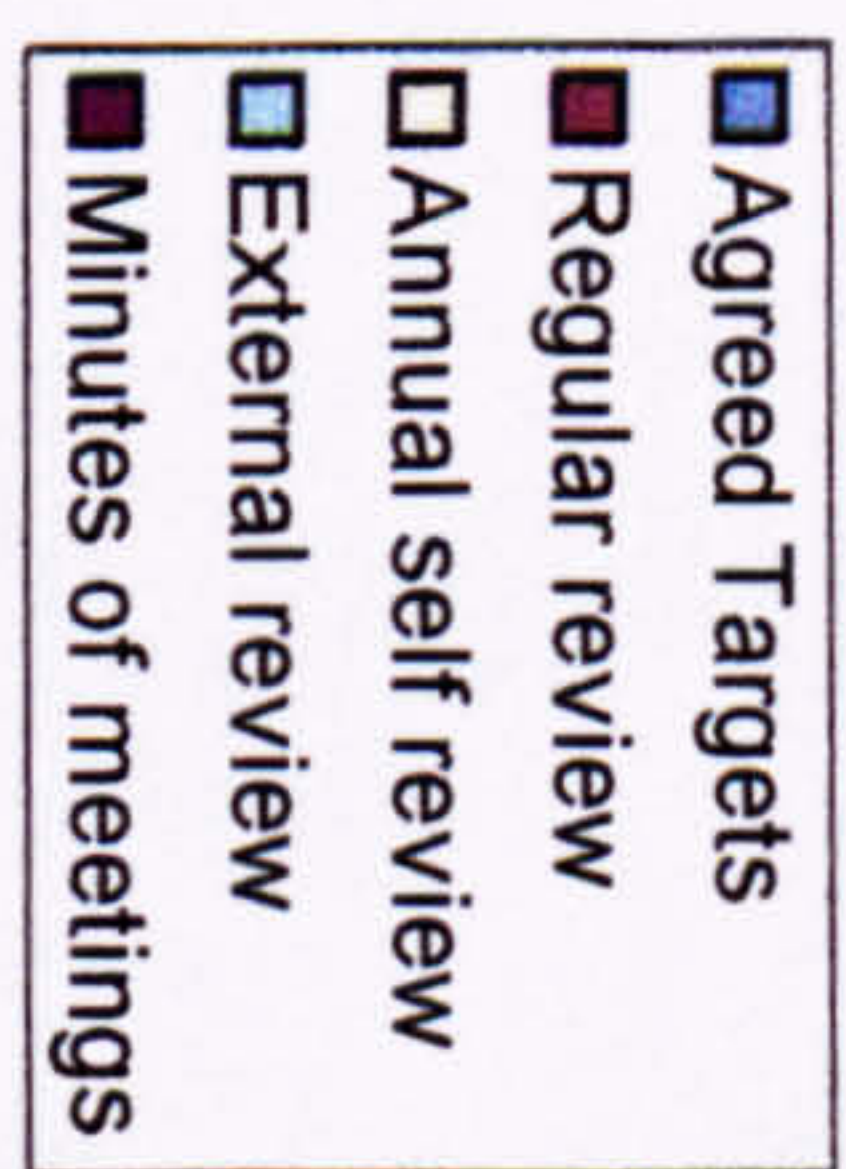
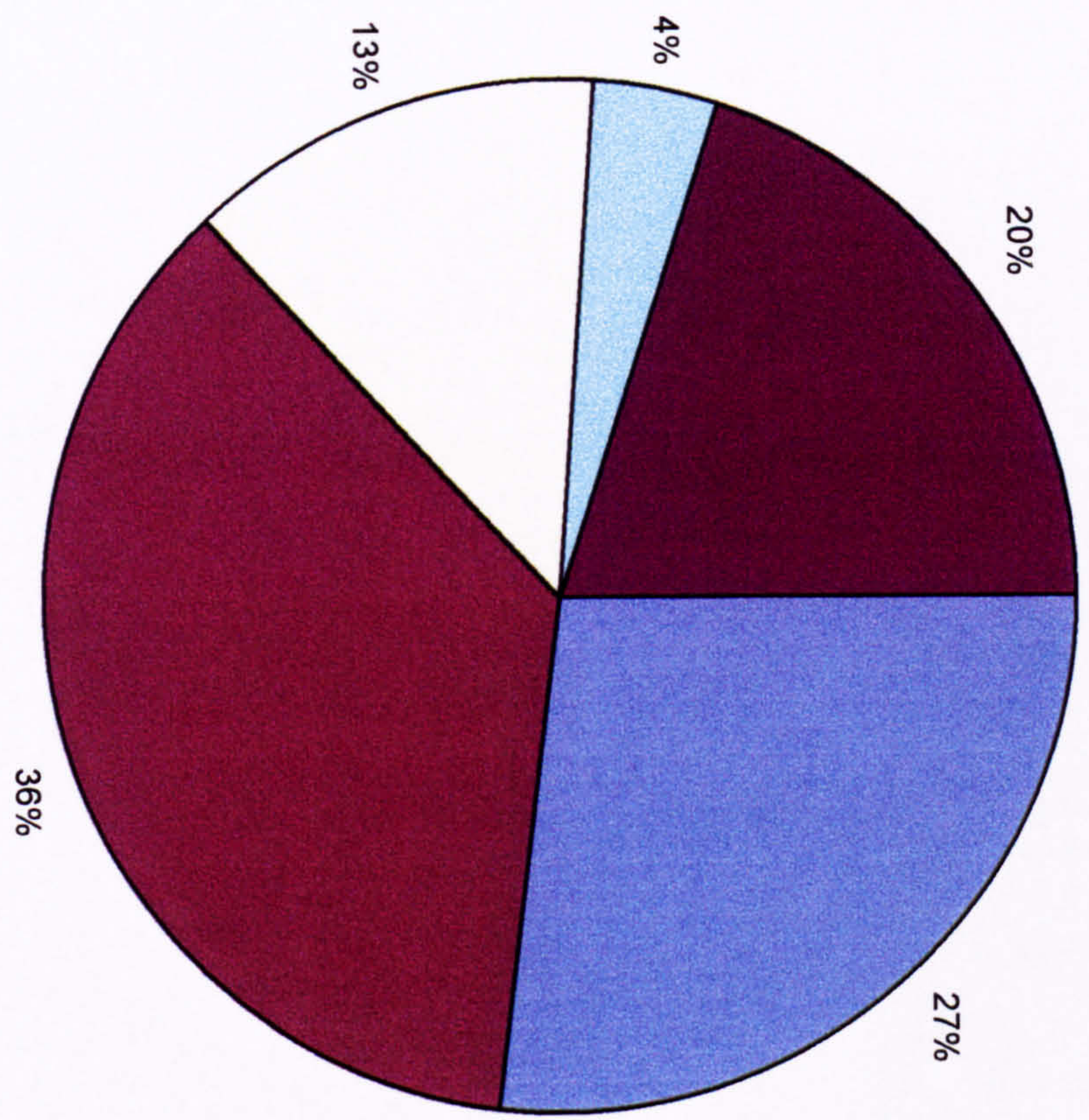
This mismatch was tested to some extent when Chairs were asked to identify the mechanisms that were used to measure the effectiveness of the governing body.

Figure 5.15 demonstrates the methods of measurement which Chairs selected from a range of items in the questionnaire.

It can be seen from Figure 5.15 that only 27% of Chairs’ responses identified ‘agreed targets for progress’ whilst 36% of Chairs’ responses identified a ‘regular review schedule’ of the schools progress. It would appear, therefore, that whilst the majority



5.15 Measure of effectiveness





of Chairs felt that their governing body was effective, the data represented in Figure 5.15 tends to support the comment of the OFSTED Report on the under-performance of governing bodies at the more 'strategic level'. Chairs believe their governing body act in an effective way yet they do not sufficiently use the instruments to test this effectiveness.

Scanlon et al (1999), in their discussion of 'Effective schools, Effective governing bodies?' re-state the four model system identified by Earley (1994);

"Model 1 is the idea where both schools and governing bodies are seen as operating effectively. Notions of school and governing body effectiveness clearly overlap and it is difficult to think of how an effective governing body could operate, other than for a short time, with an ineffective school (Model 2). Similarly, it may be possible to have a successful or effective school with an ineffective governing body (Model 3) but how much more successful might that school be with an effective governing body, working in partnership with the school and community (Model 1). Model 4, where both the school and the governing body are deemed to be ineffective, is a situation in which many schools subject to special measures find themselves". (p 34-35)

Whilst this model offers a structure to assist analysis, the findings from this present research point to a less certain categorisation. Chairs have acknowledged certain strengths as well as weaknesses which require improvement but have also acknowledged a lack of systematic monitoring of effectiveness. School governing bodies can be working toward effectiveness whilst the school is deemed effective by external assessors (OFSTED, Audit Commission, HMI). School governing bodies can, over time, move 'in and out' of being effective just as schools have been shown to do both by external assessment and school effectiveness research findings.

School governing bodies can be effective in some areas, less effective in others. They can demonstrate effectiveness at the 'structural' or 'organisational' level, yet remain

less than effective at the strategic level as noted by the Chief Inspectors of OFSTED reports.

Scanlon et al (1999) point to the problems of categorising effectiveness in governing bodies;

“...methodologically it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to ascertain the precise contribution a governing body makes in its effectiveness. Effective schools and effective governing bodies are likely to co-exist although which causes which is extremely difficult to say.” (p 34)

A further comment from Scanlon et al is also worthy of note;

“It is known, for example, that the effectiveness of the governing body is often highly dependent on the head teachers and his or her attitude and approach to governance.” (p 34)

This is a view which Grace (1995) would recognise but such a view brings with it its own problems. Is the role of the governing body so underdeveloped that it can be so influenced by one governor- the Head Teacher? This raises a further issue. Given the centrality of the role of the Chair of governors in the emerging legislation since the early 1980's, together with the perception held by Chairs that they are equal partners with Head Teachers – does the role of the Chair alone have an influence upon the effectiveness of the governing body? This is an area which is beyond the scope of this study but one which requires further consideration.

#### **4. Training as an Aid to Effectiveness**

Carrick (1996) identified, amongst the four reasons for the ineffectiveness of a governing body, the inappropriateness of governor training. Scanlon et al (1999), on the other hand, found that training was the most frequently reported suggestion which



would aid the improvement of governing bodies (p 32). Thody (1999), in tracing the development of Governor Training between 1987 – 1997, points to its growth, its more interactive role and the more dedicated support to governors. (p 131)

How, therefore, was training perceived by Chairs of governing bodies? Figure 5.16 (N = 136) illustrates the responses from Chairs to the training.

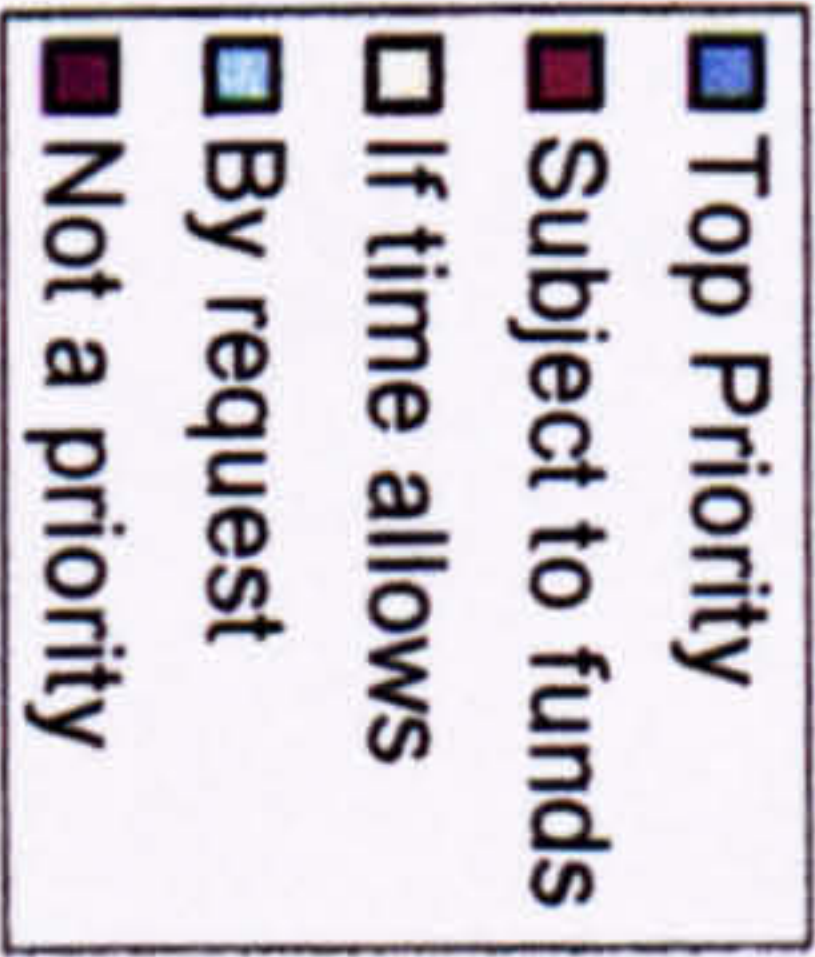
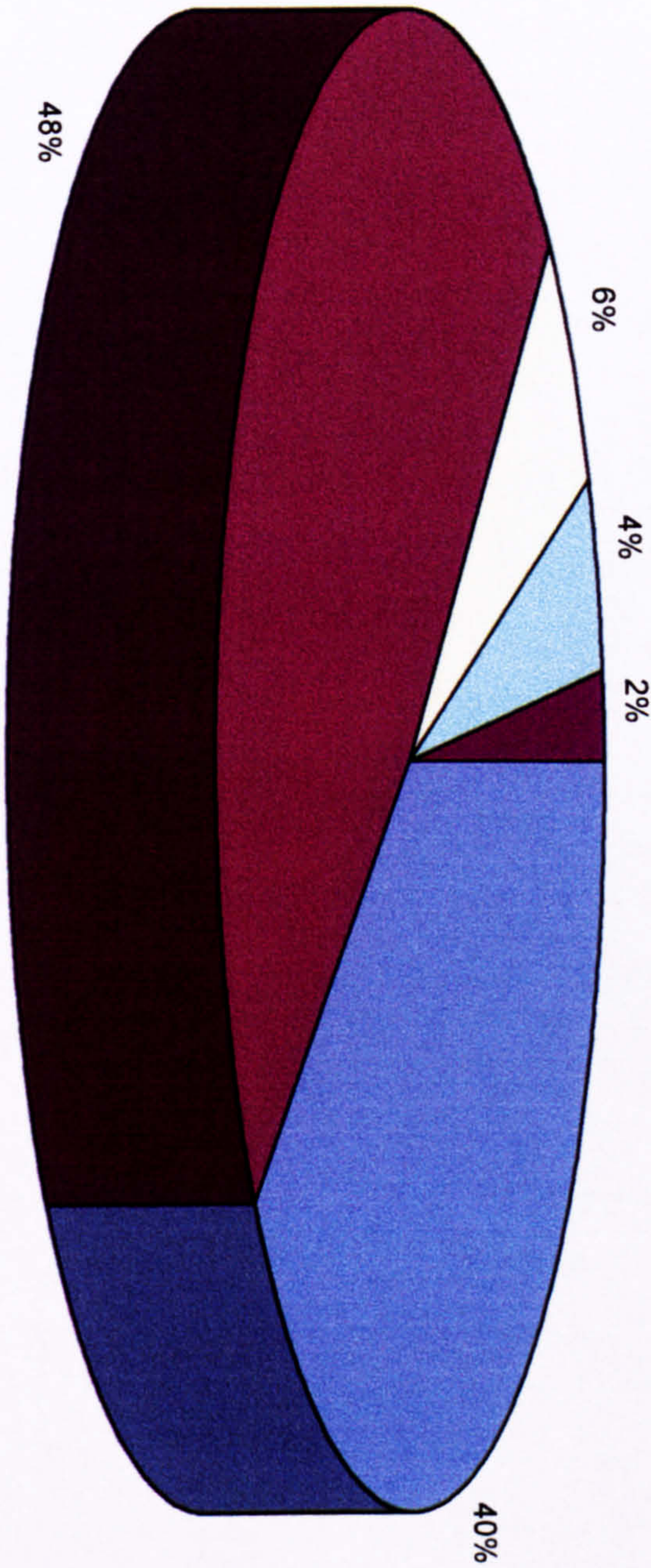
As can be seen from Figure 5.16, only a very small percentage of Chairs felt that training was not a priority, whilst 40% did. Approximately 50% of Chairs felt that training was important but subject to funds. Such a response from Chairs in this survey is a matter of some concern. To have less than 50% of the Chairs believing that training for governors is not a top priority reflects upon the role of Chairs directly given that Chairs, of all governors, should be the driving force for governor training.

When Chairs were asked to give examples of training that their governing body or individual governors had undertaken, 175 responses were forthcoming. Such responses covered a very wide range of topics with OFSTED training a clear winner in number of times mentioned (22). Other areas which were identified by a number of Chairs in each LEA were Drug Abuse (16), Pay Policy (15), Induction (12), Budget (9), School Effectiveness (9) and Special Educational Needs (8).

Several points emerge from this particular analysis . Firstly, the majority of Chairs in this study recognised the significance of training but were willing to limit its accessibility due to funds and time. This was despite a clear allocation of funds under the then Grants for Education Support and Training Scheme, now the Standards Fund, for the training of governors. Secondly, the pattern of training delivered reflected a mix of ‘topical issues’ which mirrored national/local concerns eg Drug abuse and ‘knowledge issues’ eg OFSTED, Pay Policy. The training reflected ‘subjects’ rather than ‘themes’ which address the effectiveness of the governing body. This was



5.16 Priority in Training





mirrored in the findings of Thody (1999). Despite some change in the content and style of Governor Training from the initial analysis in 1986-87, Thody states;

“Nevertheless, the majority of courses continued to be task, rather than skill related, with some dissatisfaction expressed with overly didactic teaching, occasional concerns of lack of time for discussion and information overload“. (p 123)

Thirdly, there was little evidence of whole school governing body training, although there was a recognition that such a delivery pattern was beneficial. Most training programmes in each of the LEAs were accessed by individual governors. Fourthly, there was also little evidence of Chairs accessing training opportunities which may enhance their skills and role as Chair of a governing body. This lack of training was described by one Chair of a primary school in Newshire when asked about how Chairs develop their skills.

“I suppose to get involved in the school more, that’s how I see the main way to development. Teacher governors are involved with the role of pupils and get to know what is going on in the school. I’m not sure. I haven’t done any training sessions for Chairs” (Chair, Newshire – Interview 2)

The lack of contact with other Chairs as a way of mutual support and peer group training was evident from another Chair of a primary school in Newshire.

“Other Chairmen? I’ve never met any other Chairman. I have no contact at all with the Chairs of other Governing Bodies. I don’t think my predecessor as Chair, who was a Chair for three years, had ever had dealings with any, yet we are a very clear pyramid of schools”. (Chair, Newshire – Interview 4)

Even in Thody’s analysis (1999) of governor training between 1987-1997, there is no mention of Chair specific training to enhance and develop the skills of Chairs in order to assist in the effectiveness of governing body business. Whilst Chairs, like any member of the governing body, can access training across the whole range of

programmes available, training in the skills of Chair and its relation to governing body effectiveness is not a priority as far as the evidence of this present study is concerned.

## **F. Information Needs of Chairs**

### **1. Context**

Access to, understanding of and the use of information are basic requirements of any organisation. School governing bodies are no different in relation to these basic requirements. Indeed, a governing body could not work effectively without access to quality information on which to base their decision making and planning.

In a research project undertaken by the University of Northumbria at Newcastle into the training and information needs of school governors in the author's LEA (1994), the report noted;

“The most commonly used information source for governors is the Newsletter (know as ‘The Governor’) followed closely by asking the Head Teacher. Next in importance are national newspapers, asking the Chair of the governing body and then asking other governors”. (p 11)

This was a report produced on a survey of governor needs in general and in identifying priorities for access of information, governors in Southshire in 1994 identified the Chair as a fourth priority. If school governors in one LEA identified the Chair as the fourth source of information for themselves, how then did Chairs of governors access information and is such information adequate for the purpose of operating effectively?



## **2. Information Sources**

Figure 5.17 illustrates the responses from Chairs to prioritise their sources of information. It can be seen from Figure 5.17 that Chairs relied heavily on the Head Teacher for information. 80% (114) of the Chairs placed the Head Teacher as their first priority, with 10% (15) identifying LEA officers as their first priority. This should not be surprising given the earlier findings of this study in the close relationship of Chairs and Head Teachers, their frequency of meetings and the largely satisfactory view that Chairs held on the Head Teachers report as a source of information.

However, this dependency can be problematical. Huckman (1994) identifies some of the implications of the Head Teachers' control of information, using as an example the day to day running of the school and the question of financial autonomy..

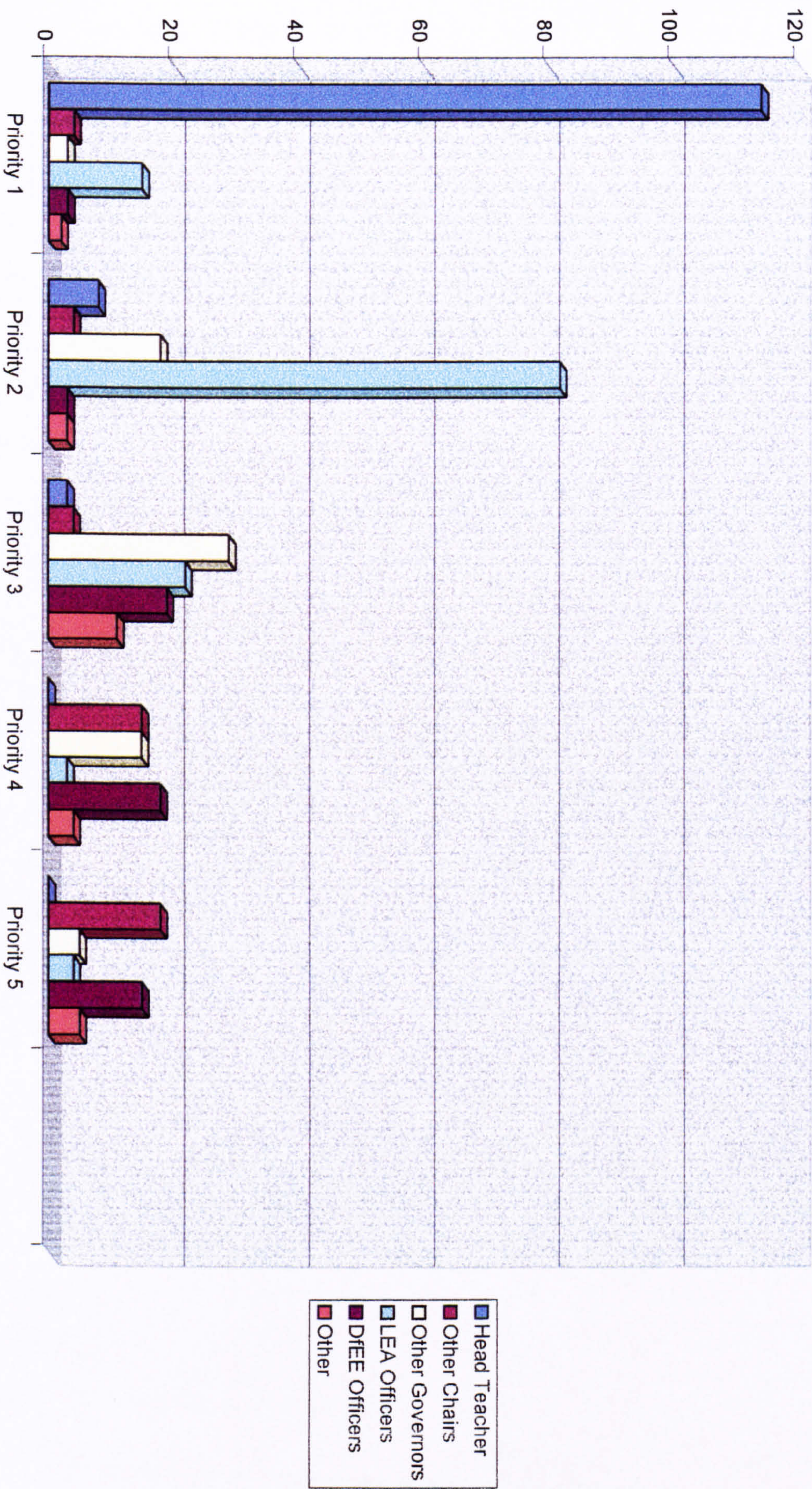
“Much of the information necessary for decision making at the schools was possessed solely by the Head Teachers. Not even Chairs of Finance were allowed access to the LEA Management Information System. Control of information provided Heads with a considerable degree of power. Heads could control the direction of governors meetings, presenting only those issues on which they needed or required their governors' support, opinions and actions”. (p151)

Deem et al (1995) also identified the role of the Head Teacher in the ‘flow of information’ to the governing body.

“Heads also filtered the information available to governors, both out of consideration for time constraints and because they wanted to influence the outcome. Some head teachers were skilled at inviting governors to choose from a range of options...” (p 125)



5.17 Chairs' Information Sources





It is therefore interesting, in this study, to note the balance of responses of Chairs in choosing their second priority in terms of accessing information. Out of the 118 responses to identify a second priority, 'LEA Officers' accounted for 70% (82) of the responses with 'other governors' accounting for just over 16% (18). This is a particularly strong reflection on Chairs' reliance upon LEA officers to provide or interpret information on their behalf. It has to be noted that these findings are drawn from a survey undertaken in late 1997 – early 1998. At this time, the education policies of New Labour had not had time to take effect and therefore Chairs were responding in the light of local circumstances and the continuing aftermath of the predominant philosophy of school based management and decision making which was limiting the role of the LEA.

Huckman (1994) hints at what might have been the Head Teachers' concern at their reliance upon LEA officers;

“Heads were also aware of the possibility that governors could misinterpret or misreport information given to them by agencies outside the school and that it would be the head teachers' task to resolve any confusion that resulted”.

(p 151)

Nevertheless, from the analysis of returns to the questionnaire in this study, if only first and second priorities are taken into account, 47% of Chairs rely on the Head Teacher for information whilst 37% of Chairs rely upon the LEA. Clearly therefore, in this study, the LEA officers have an important contribution to make to the effectiveness and efficiency of a Chair's role in terms of information, in addition to the Head Teacher.

It is also noteworthy that communication and interaction with other Chairs of governors accounts for only 3% of the first two priorities. That percentage does not change when the third priority is taken into account and only by one percentage point

when all five priorities are taken into account. Other Chairs of governors, therefore, are not a point of reference for Chairs for information, advice or guidance.

One Chair of a primary school in Northshire confirms this lack of communication with other Chairs.

“I did speak to other colleagues that I know chair other schools, particularly the local ones, but I have to confess to an extent I am only really interested in whether the way that the Chairman’s role is carried out at our school is satisfactory to the needs of our school ...So I don’t spend a lot of time discussing with other Chairs my particular style of chairing.”  
(Male Chair of Primary School, Northshire – Interview 1

When asked about what steps he has taken to develop the role of Chair, this interviewee responded;

“There’s not much else other than the things I have already described, you know, the discussions with the Head and the other governors, but I haven’t gone in for any formal training or anything like that.”

**3. Adequacy of Information in general**

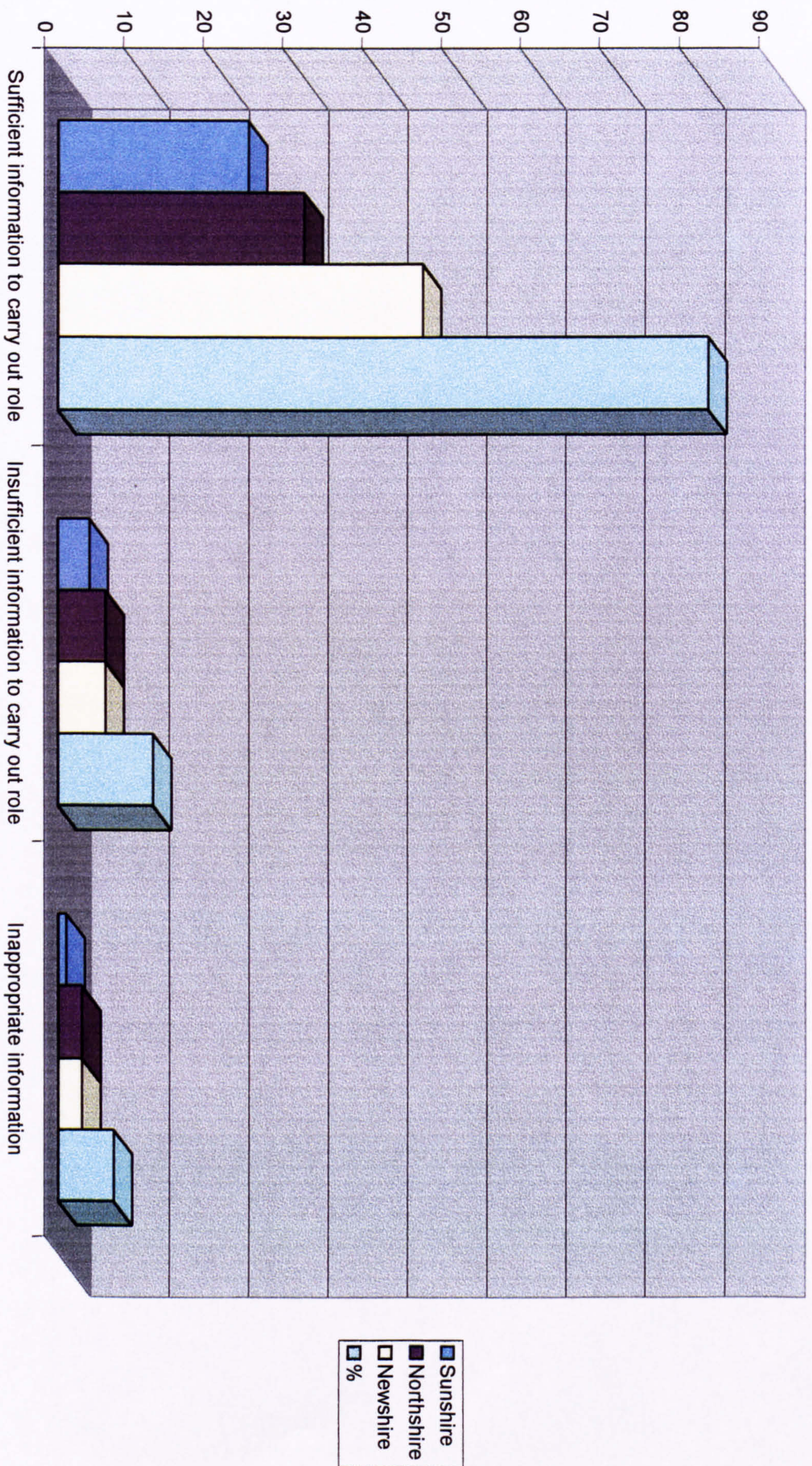
In terms of information, Chairs were asked to identify whether they felt the information they received was sufficient for their needs, insufficient or inappropriate. Figure 5.18 details the responses (N = 129).

It is evident that most Chairs (82%) felt that the information that they received was sufficient for them to carry out their role whilst 12% felt that they have insufficient information. Only 5% felt that the information they received was inappropriate.

There was no major difference between the three LEAs. In asking Chairs to define what areas the information was insufficient or inappropriate, 23 respondents (17%) listed a wide range of issues. Table 5.19 lists the issues identified by the Chairs of governors. This table represents an overall summary of all three LEAs responses. There was no difference in the response levels from each LEA.



5.18. Adequacy of Chairs' information





**5.19 Areas where insufficient or inappropriate information is given**

Issue	Number of Responses
Training for Chairs/Joint Meetings of Chairs	6
Too much information to digest of the wrong kind	4
Comparative data	2
Salary Level of Head and Deputy Head Teacher	2
Inappropriate advice from DfEE/LEA	2
Little professional advice from LEA	1
Insufficient information from school	1
Chairs – LEA officer meeting	1
Inappropriate advice on LEA policy	1
Lack of financial information	1
Lack of relevant information to our school	1
Monitoring and Evaluation	1
Total	23
Percentage	17%

The findings in Table 5.19 have to be put into proportion. This table represents 17% of Chairs responses and then they are spread over a range of issues. Whilst ‘Training for Chairs/Joint meetings for Chairs’ has the most responses, issues of comparability (comparative data 2; salary levels of Heads and Deputies 2; insufficient information for my school 1; lack of relevant information to our school 1;) are also an emerging concern to those respondents.

However, the conclusion must be that the Chairs’ responding to the survey felt that the information they received was adequate for their needs. If this information largely came from the Head Teacher, what were the Chairs’ views on the issue of the Head Teachers’ reports to the governing body?

**4. Head Teacher’s Report**

The role of the Head Teacher’s report in the business of the governing body is acknowledged by the DfEE in ‘Guidance on Good Governance’ (1996)



“The headteacher needs to establish a system which shows the fulfillment of his or her accountability of the governing body. The normal vehicle should be the termly written report which should provide a clear and permanent record ... The head teacher’s report should be sent to members of the governing body at the same time as notice of meetings; that is, at least seven clear days before they take place”. (p 16)

Timely presentation and content therefore are important to the meaningfulness of the report. In this study, 81% (107) of Chairs reported that the Head Teacher’s report was sent to governors prior to the meeting in order for the content to be read and digested. 19% (25) of Chairs, however, reported that the Head Teacher’s report was tabled at the meeting. Whether the Chairs agreed with this proposal or whether they felt that they did not wish to upset the balance of the relationship with the Head Teacher by directing the Head Teacher to distribute the report in advance, is difficult to determine.

However, when asked whether Chairs had had cause to direct the Head Teacher to include some aspect of the school’s work in his or her report, 28% (37) of Chairs responding indicated that they had done so. It could be surmised, therefore, that Chairs were not unforthcoming when a situation arose with regard to their information needs and that of the governing body. Clearly, the tabling of the most important source of information, as perceived by Chairs, at the meeting is not good practice (ie. Guidance on Good Governance p 16) yet 19% of Chairs allowed this to happen. When the occasions that Chairs gave directions to Head Teacher were analysed more closely, it was found that 28% (37) of respondents generated 43 responses over a wide range of issues. One Chair commented that ‘it is not my job to do this’ (Northshire) whilst another Chair remarked “my Head Teacher would not accept it “ (Northshire).



Table 5.20 lists the issues as identified by Chairs across all three LEAs in the survey. There is the possibility of ‘grouping’ some of the responses into more generic areas but this table represents the phrases used by Chairs in their responses. Only those responses generating two or more responses are recorded for the purposes of the table.

**5.20 Occasions of Chair’s direction with regard to Head Teacher’s Report**

Topic	Number of Occasions			Total
	Sunshire	Northshire	Newshire	
Academic standards/target	2	1	1	4
Staff matters (discipline, appraisal, pupil difficulty		4		4
Financial update	1	1	1	3
Prioritisation of agenda item	1		2	3
OFSTED information	1		2	3
Staffing Budget	1		1	2
Staff/pupil numbers	1		1	2
Health and Safety	1	1		2
Induction of new Head Teacher			2	2
SAT’s results	1		1	2
Total	9	7	11	27

Other areas of the Chair giving directions to the Head Teacher included ‘curriculum information’, ‘child abuse’, ‘information to visitors’ to ‘handling parents’. Chairs obviously identified key areas which needed to be brought to the fore and reported upon by the Head Teacher. Once again, however, the analysis needs to be treated with caution. Firstly, the total number of responses (27) is small in relation to the total number of potential responses (132). Secondly, when Chairs reported on their



level of satisfaction with the Head Teachers report, out of 121 responses as to whether Chairs found the Head Teacher's report 'lacking in detail', 'just right for the governing body's needs' or 'too detailed', 88% of Chairs felt that the Head's report was 'just right for their needs' whilst 10% felt that it was 'lacking in detail'.

## **G. Working Practices – Chair of governing body**

### **1. Context**

In 'Understanding Schools as Organisations', Handy and Aitken (1986) comment:

“Any organisation needs systems for communicating and arranging things, as well as a structure for dividing up the work and defining the relationship of people to each other. It will require someone to set priorities and define responsibilities and duties. Someone then has to make sure that these responsibilities are carried out and must apportion praise or disapproval when necessary”. (p 12)

Handy and Aitken had in mind the Head Teacher of the school when making such observations. Yet how easy it is to translate the meaning of 'organisation' from 'school' to a 'governing body'; the 'someone' being the Chair rather than the Head Teacher. This transferability can be applied to another observation of Handy and Aitken's when they discuss the potential difficulties of belonging to a small school..

“The size of a primary school with 9 or 10 teachers and 10 – 12 support staff, should mean that the head and staff are able to communicate personally and frequently, unlike in the larger organisations, that many secondary schools are. But smaller organisations are not immune from contrary forces. They may become a dictatorship (counting too much for their purpose to one person) or an oligarchy (p 17).



The size of a governing body can range from 9 to 23 (this is prior to changes in the composition of governing bodies as a result of the 1998 School and Framework Act). This larger figure is not dissimilar in size to the whole staffing complement of Handy and Aitken's school. If this 'transferability' is taken further, then the Chair (as opposed to the Head Teacher), and governors should be "able to communicate personally and frequently". Furthermore, the 'governing body' as a 'small organisation' should not become a dictatorship or an oligarchy.

Chairs, conscious of their role as head of the governing body, need to determine the working priorities of the governing body if the Chair and governors are to communicate personally and frequently. How did Chairs, therefore, conduct the business of the governing body in terms of working practices?

## **2. Formal or informal?**

Formality presupposes a certain level of discipline and control, informality a certain level of flexibility and latitude. Data from the survey showed that 65% of the 150 responses (a number of Chairs tackled both alternatives) indicated a 'relaxed' style in their Chairmanship whilst 35% of the responses indicated a 'formal' style.

This, in itself, is only a broad outline of a general trend but when the other factors of the conduct of business are considered, what picture emerges?

From the survey data, Chairs rarely construct the agenda of the governing body meeting without referring to other parties, those being the Head Teacher (51%) and the Clerk to the governing body (26%).

Once the agenda has been determined and sent out to governors in accordance with the statutory deadline, 56% of Chairs responding (n = 134) indicated that they stuck rigidly to the agenda whilst 44% indicated that non-agenda items were allowed.



Once the business of the meeting was underway, 71% of Chairs (n = 137) responded in favour of allowing agenda items all the time that was required to debate them fully whilst 29% of Chairs applied a 'guillotine' for each item after a certain length of time. Overall, in the time taken for the full governing body meeting, 62% of Chairs (n = 134) allowed the meeting to come to a natural conclusion whilst 38% imposed a time limit.

Given some of the mixed messages coming from such data, the final set of data relating to 'working practices' asked Chairs to identify whether they were 'directive' in the role as Chair or 'facilitative'. In response (n = 135), 76% of Chairs indicated that they were facilitators and 24% indicated that they were directive! What emerges therefore, is a picture of a Chair who is central to the determination of the agenda for the governing body meeting. The majority of Chairs – two thirds – are likely to be relaxed and informal in the conduct of business. They will allow a certain amount of leeway in the matters discussed at the termly meeting that are not on the agenda and they will be flexible in the time allowed for each agenda item and the length of the meeting as a whole. A minority of Chairs will impose a time limit on the meeting and apply a guillotine on items on the agenda if they feel too much time has already been spent.

### **3. Chairs' influence on the meetings of the governing body**

The survey data elicited Chairs' view about working practices and how they perceived the conduct of business at meetings. Whilst there was a range of responses, a general divide of two thirds of Chairs believed they were facilitative and flexible, whilst one third were more directive and disciplined. However, from other data, it is not as clear cut as this two third/one third divide suggests. This is evidenced by the Chair of a Northshire primary school in discussing her planning for governor meetings.

"I plan with the Head Teacher and we draw up the agenda together. I will go in a couple of days before and draw that up and I say shall we put this on? We go through how we want to talk about this, how much time do you want to



give this ....I can't stand full governors meetings going on for three hours; its just ludicrous and I object to documents being placed in front of me that I haven't seen before wanting a decision to be made ... I will not have it, so I insist we meet beforehand and discuss things and if I think its worthy of a long meeting on its own then we have one or might delegate to a sub-committee. I always ask the governors how do you feel about this, you know, do you think we should do this, so I use everyone's opinion.”  
(Chair – Northshire – Interview 11)

In this instance, the Chair collaborates with the Head Teacher in drawing up the agenda and plans potential outcomes and then plans provisional timings. The Chair will not allow tabled documents at the meetings. This is more reflective of the 'directive' rather than 'facilitative' tendency but the Chair mentions consultation with the other members of the governing body, indicating some concession to the 'facilitative' approach. This particular Chair laid great emphasis upon governors involvement.

“I suppose the most important thing for me as Chair is that I feel that I want everyone to feel that they have had a good meeting; that they have gone away thinking that their time has been valuable but not to go away and say that was a waste of time”. (Chair – Northshire – Interview 11)

However, when asked about how others may see her style of Chairmanship, she explained;

“I think my view of the Chairmanship is probably different from other Chairs. I have met with quite a number of Chairs who are very reluctant to share a lot of information with the rest of the governing body. But I think a lot depends on the Head Teacher and the relationship between the Head Teacher and Chairman. Some Head Teachers just want to confide in the Chair and obviously there is confidentiality . Sometimes you don't want to discuss with the rest of the governing body if its all going to be resolved and there is no need, but I always, keep an open mind.” (Chair – Northshire – Interview 11)

Therefore, whilst this one Chair was fairly 'directive' in her planning of a governors' meeting, she was keen to facilitate involvement but also believed that there were times when the full governing body did not need to know things.

How far does the style adopted by the Chair therefore impact upon the work of the governing body? Clearly, the Chair-Head Teacher relationship is a factor in this.

From the interview data, other factors emerge.



“The formal basis of the meetings is due to the background of the governors – they know that there is protocol to be followed. It is ritualistically formal. They are conscious of the need to follow formal meeting protocol.”  
(Chair, Northshire – Interview 12)

In this instance, the Chair described the composition of the governing body as being composed of a range of professional people including doctors, academics and solicitors and educationalists. This composition lent itself, the interviewee believed, to the ‘formal’ side of conducting business, reflecting as it did, the professional background of the governors.

A further factor was the background of the Chairs’ themselves. A Chair of a primary school in Northshire commented.

“Certainly the way I see it in the school that I am operating in, it is mostly a facilitated role. I don’t see it as my role to tell everybody what the school should do. That doesn’t mean that I don’t see the need to give a lead ... I don’t think I want to be directive all the time in the way sometimes an executive director might be ... I think that partly reflects the style of working life that I have got with the work that I do is facilitating and helping the governors to be involved in working together as a team”.  
(Chair, Northshire – Interview 11)

This Chair was a senior officer in a housing department for a local Council and a former union shop steward. The style of chairmanship therefore, reflected his operational style in his professional background.

Another Chair, a Head of Faculty in a large College of Further Education, stated

“I attend so many meetings, that I observe different ways of running them and there are very different ways to run them and I suppose, really in a way, I adopt what is essentially the house style that I’m used to in my own working life and that style suits me but I have seen other chairs do it”.  
(Chair, Special School, Southshire - Interview 5)

This Chair’s principal aim was involvement and participation and ownership of the decisions taken. Her own experience in her professional life led her to conduct in the style with which she felt most comfortable but at the same time, effectively.



The adoption of a certain style of chairmanship therefore does seem to have an impact upon the broad operation of a governing body. Facilitative in professional life, facilitative as Chair.

One Chair from Newshire, however, had a duality of role.

“There are individuals on behalf of the governing body who do their own thing on behalf of the governing body. In a sense, I co-ordinate what they do ... I don't manage what they do, I just facilitate. I certainly have a very dominant role in relation to the management of governing body meetings. I mean, I'm the only person who draws up the agenda. I will sit down with the Head and draw up the agenda and go through the notes of the previous meeting before they are circulated, so I'm very controlling about the conduct of meetings and I'm on two sub-committees and I suppose I tend to dominate these as well ... Anything to do with the Head is me”.

(Chair, Middle School, Northshire – Interview 4)

This Chair was facilitative in the general role of governors involvement in the school, directive in the actual conduct of business.

#### **4. Chair – Governing Body interaction in meetings**

The observational data collected from three meetings of governing bodies is similar to the survey data in the general tendency of Chairs to believe that they are facilitative in the operation of meetings. Three meetings of school governors in Southshire were observed using the observational schedule in Appendix 5. Two of the three meetings were termly meetings of the governing body and one meeting was of a finance committee of the full governing body. In all three instances, the Chairs appeared to be facilitative, in the sense that, through interaction with the Head Teacher and, in two cases, the Clerk to the governing body and the LEA Adviser, the business of the meeting was addressed. However, the observational data did illustrate that while the Chair's style may be described as 'facilitative', the actuality was sometimes different.

##### **4(a) Meeting of St Bernadette's RC Governing Body – Southshire LEA**

St. Bernadette's RC school is a 11-18 aided school in Southshire. The governing body termly meeting lasted 1 hour and 46 minutes. There were 13 governors in attendance



excluding the Chair and Head Teacher and the Clerk and LEA Adviser were also in attendance. The Chair had held his position for 4 years and was a local solicitor. The agenda and relevant papers, including the Head Teachers report, had been sent to governors prior to the meeting. The agenda was highly structured and each item allocated a specific length of time on the actual agenda. The analysis of the meeting was undertaken using a key which identified when a question was asked, when a statement of less than 1 minute was made and when a statement of more than 1 minute was made. It also identified who spoke on what topic. The analysis illustrated that the meeting was dominated by the interaction of the Chair and Head Teacher . The Chair's interventions were largely by way of particular questions for the Head Teacher or open questions to the governors (eg "Well, then, what is your view?") and short statements of less than 1 minute which were largely aimed at moving through the agenda or, to a much lesser extent, clarifying or summarising issues. The intervention from other governors was minimal. Two governors didn't speak at all, four governors either asked one question or made one statement of less than one minute and the remaining five governors (excluding the Chair and Head Teacher) sporadically intervened to either ask a question or make a short statement on 21 occasions.

What this analysis demonstrated was that, whilst the Chair 'facilitated' the business of the meeting – the meeting finished at the arranged time and the Chair moved through the business with the agreement of the other governors, – there was a particular concentration of effort on behalf of and communication between a limited range of individuals. Whilst the meeting may have been effective in terms of getting through the agenda in the allocated time, the effectiveness of the meeting in terms of governor involvement in decision making and governor influence in discussions is less certain. The role of 'critical friend' was not one evident in the business of this meeting.



#### **4(b) Meeting of St Simon C of E Governing Body – Southshire LEA**

St.Simon's C of E school is junior mixed and infants aided school in Southshire.

In the meeting of the governing body of St Simon's C of E JMI School, a similar picture emerged. (see Appendix 5). The termly meeting lasted 1 hour 38 minutes and ten governors including the Chair and Head Teacher attended. The Chair was the local parish priest who had been Chair for six years. The meeting was characterised by the significant interplay between the Chair and Head Teacher with a particular concentration upon short statements and questions . There was little evidence of long explanations other than from the LEA Adviser on matters of reports from the Director of Education. The majority of governors said little other than brief comments on minor matters. The Chair adopted a relaxed attitude to the business of the meeting and often allowed discussion to broaden beyond the agenda item. In such instances, he was kept on track by the Vice-Chair. The most interesting point to note was the 'staccato' style interplay between the Chair and Head Teacher which had the effect of allowing the meeting to become disjointed and, at times, off track. It also had the effect of excluding other governors.

The survey data illustrates that, whilst the working practices of the Chair may be described by Chairs as more toward the 'flexible', 'facilitative' approach, the observational and interview data suggest either a more 'directive' approach due to the nature of the Chair – Head Teacher interaction or an interpretation of 'facilitative' which is very narrow in definition.

Handy and Aitken (1984), in their discussion about school as organisations and the different characteristics associated with a school, comment;

“... the assumption about the way things should be run and organised have a major effect on the way people see themselves, the way they behave, think and react. Even if the assumptions are unwitting or unconscious and have been



around as long as the scenes, they are still important. Anyone who is charged with running classes, sections of schools or whole schools needs to be aware of what these assumptions are and of their effects”. (p 45-46)

Chairs, charged with ensuring the efficiency and effectiveness of governing body business, also need to take heed of the assumptions held by the other governors who may not share the Chair’s view of the working practices of the governing body.

## **H. Chairs’ Perception of the Changes and Pressures in their Role in Recent Years**

### **1. Context**

Whitty, Power and Halpin (1998), in discussing the self managing school and the community, relate to the work of Grace (1995) and Deem et al (1995) when referring to the relationships between Head Teacher and governors.

“Even when lay governors have opinions they wish to express, it seems that they face great difficulty in making their ‘voice’ heard, let alone in having their views taken seriously. A part of the problem here is the knowledge that most lay governors draw upon in the deliberations of the governing body. As Deem et al (1995. p 85) stress, when it bears upon educational institutions and processes, it tends to be ‘incomplete, fragmented and, on occasion inaccurate’. Consequently, the more expert and informed perspectives of the Head Teacher and the teacher governors tend to hold centre stage and carry more weight” (p 100)

Indeed, Deem et al (1995) expand upon the role of lay governors in having views of education which may be at odds with the schools they govern.

“This may lead to fruitful discussion and the increased involvement of governors but equally it may lead to conflict between Heads and governors. It may also result in boundary maintenance strategies by professionals aimed at reducing governor participation”. (p 85)



Whitty et al point to a knowledge and experience 'vacuum' which allows the Head Teacher to influence events whilst Deem et al point to potential cultural and philosophical conflicts which causes Head Teachers to put up protective boundaries. The essence of this research is to demonstrate that the role of Chair is of growing significance and is one that mediates between the Head and governors to minimise the risk of conflict and to lessen the information gap between Head and governors. As Scanlon et al (1999) illustrated, the majority of Chairs and governors were well educated with a wide range of qualifications (p 40). Their survey responses showed that 36% of Chairs had a first degree and 26% of Chairs had professional qualifications. Given such academic levels, together with the professional background of many Chairs, the observations of Whitty, Power and Halpin and Deem need to put into context. Their observations may refer to the generality in Head Teacher – governor relationships but when it comes to the role of Chair, such observations need to be refined.

### **1. Chairs Perceptions of Changes**

The pressures and changes which a Chair of a school governing body has to deal with have changed considerably since the introduction of Local Management of Schools. This view is shared by the majority of Chairs in the survey data. Chairs were asked to identify how the role of Chair had changed in recent years in relation to Workload, Time, Pressures, Relations with Governors, with the Head Teacher, with the LEA and with the DfEE. Some of the findings from this data have already been referred to earlier in this chapter in relation to 'Time Spent' and 'Relations with Governors' and 'Relations with Head Teachers'.

#### **(a) Workload**

Just over 90% of Chairs responding (n = 117) believed that there had been an increase in workload in their role as Chair. The reasons given were varied. They ranged from the additional responsibilities delegated to schools under local management, an



increase in documentation and reading material from both the LEA and DfEE, more meetings in order to conduct business appropriately and the need to spend more time in school.

One Chair of a large secondary school in Northshire believed that enormous changes had taken place.

“Well, the role of Chair and governor has changed beyond belief in the last few years. When I started 25 years ago it was three meetings a year when we read papers, went along, said a few words and everything was all done and dusted. Seven or eight years ago when we had LMS delegated on a trial basis initially, the role of Chair and the role of all governors changed. .... The Chairman’s role is now much more that, of, yes, a Chairman of the Board or something like that, but a very active Chair”. (Chair, Northshire secondary school – Interview 3)

Another Chair of a primary school in Newshire commented;

“The only change in the role of Chairman is because of LMS and it is greater because of the greater responsibility which the school governors have. I suppose that will increase in the future because of even more responsibility and managing more of the school and the budget and other things which governors do. I am not sure that this is necessarily a good thing for schools, especially in primary schools where there is a limited facility for schools to take the role of looking after their own building and eventually school dinners....”

(Chair primary school Newshire – Interview 2)

One Chair’s response was illuminating. This Chair believed that her role was constant whilst all around her changed.

“Well I think the role of the Chairman is a fairly constant thing but the sorts of issues that schools and governing bodies are called upon to address these days have changed and, therefore, I think that the levels of questions that might be raised and the nature of discussions that take place require a slightly different approach”. (Chair, Special School – Interview 5)

This is an important distinction to note in that, as this Chair states, the formal function of chairing a meeting might not have changed but the influence and pressures acting upon the overall role of the Chair and governing body do change. The effectiveness of a Chair’s role will depend upon how successful this adaptation can be. Scanlon et



al (1999) reported that only 25% of Chairs in their survey felt that the workload was ‘unreasonable’ due to volume of work and the constraints in their own professional and personal lives as well as the additional responsibility they are given even though it is a voluntary role (p 49)

Whilst this study’s survey asked Chairs to make a comment about workload and 96% said it had increased, the question addressed in Scanlon’s research – was the workload reasonable? - was not asked. Therefore the results cannot be directly compared.

**(b)     Pressures**

Nevertheless, this study went on to ask what pressures had Chairs faced in recent years? 70% of Chairs responding (n = 121) felt that the pressures overall had increased whilst 15% felt that there had been no change. Where did the pressures come from?

Table 5 .21    lists the range of responses from all three LEAs.

**5. 21 - Pressures identified by Chairs of Governors**

<b>Pressure</b>	<b>Number of responses</b>
Finance/Budget	12
Too Many Responsibilities	11
Staffing issues (Appointments, Reductions)	8
Family/work commitment	6
OFSTED	6
Own performance at meetings, role as chair	4
National Curriculum	1
School Development Plan	1
Reading/information	1
Parents	1
Target setting	1
Competition between schools	1
Pupil discipline	1
Total	54



Overall, 54 responses identifying specific areas were forthcoming and ranged over thirteen topics. 20% of Chairs responding believed that the main pressure came from financial issues related to budget setting and planning; 20% felt that the pressures were generated by too many responsibilities being delegated to governing bodies; 10% felt that the pressures were 'family' orientated in that the pressure on the Chair to be visible in school was compromised by family commitments. A further 16% of Chairs believed that additional pressures were related to general issues to do with staffing, such as appointments and reductions in staffing.

Table 5.21 presents an interesting insight into Chairs' views about the nature of pressures they face for several reasons. Firstly, there is a mix of the clearly identifiable areas. These range from finance and budget pressures, pressures of personnel issues such as making the right appointment combined with the negative side of making staff reductions, the pressures relating to an OFSTED Inspection together with the less concrete areas such as the pressures on family and work life and concerns over their own performance at meetings. Secondly, and surprisingly, there is relatively little mention of OFSTED inspections. This may be due to the fact that, at the time that this research was undertaken, each school in each LEA had undergone the first round of inspections and that, once over, it held no special fear for Chairs. A further reason may have been the fact that, whilst staff of the school may have felt under pressure from an OFSTED inspection, the governing body and the Chair viewed it as an opportunity to 'position' their school in the overall framework. Indeed, as Earley (1999) states,

"It is apparent from the research evidence that inspections have the potential to empower rather than weaken or emasculate governing bodies. For some it has meant, perhaps for the first time, that they have had a meaningful involvement in the school and its decision making and planning process."



Given such a view, why should governors and Chairs feel that OFSTED, for them is an unwanted pressure when they have the potential to gain from it?

**(c) Relations with the LEA**

As spokesperson for the governing body, the Chair of governors often has to liaise with officers of the LEA over a wide range of issues. How did Chairs, therefore, view their relationships with the LEAs in recent years?

Almost 50% of Chairs felt that there had been an increase in communication and consultation with their LEA whilst 25% felt that it was much the same. (n = 109).

Not all of the increased communication and consultation, however, was of the positive kind. Table 5.22 illustrates the nature of the responses from Chairs. On this issue, 43 responses were received from the survey data.

**5. 22            - Chairs view of relations with the LEA where they felt some change had taken place**

Area of relationship		Number of responses
Supportive change	- role of supporter to school	13
	- information provider	10
	- positive relationship	7
	- influencing agent	2
Areas of specific assistance	- OFSTED	1
	- School Development Planning	1
Problematic Change	- Strained relationships	2
	- Financial issues	2
	- too high LEA staff turnover	1
	- More meetings of confrontational style	1
	- Slower response	1
	- Need to make Representations to LEA	2

Clearly, the balance of the 43 responses from Chairs, in which they identified a particular area to illustrate the nature of the change in the relationship, lies with a positive change. It is also interesting to note that all eight of the ‘problematic change’



responses came from Chairs from one LEA – Northshire. It is also important to note that, at the time of the fieldwork for this research, this LEA was in the early stages of a major LEA restructuring.

Evidence from this survey illustrates that, whilst the number of Chairs actively responding with a comment in this survey was only one third of the total, of those that did respond, 80% did so in a positive way. Chairs were conscious, therefore, of the role of the LEA as a source of potential support and advice. The relationship with the LEA is also illustrated by anecdotal evidence from Earley (1999).

“One GTC (Governor Training Co-ordinator) gave the example of her LEA where a governing body had had concerns about the head and the lack of information they received. They were not sure what to do about this situation so the Chair of governors approached the LEA’s Governor Training Unit whose advice was to ask the school’s link adviser to do a mini-inspection. There had been rumblings from both teachers and parents and the governors were not sure what was happening and why the school was making so little progress. The head’s response to the governors was that the school did not need a mini-inspection and neither could it afford it. The governors had to really push for this and insist that it was their right. Eventually the LEA did the inspection without charge and as a result of its finding the head took early retirement.” (p33)

Further evidence was gleaned from the diary entries of Chairs. Table 5.23 lists the number of times each diarist identified a contact with the LEA in the conduct of business over a four- week period. The contact was through a variety of means: telephone contact with LEA officer; meeting with LEA officer; meeting of the governors at which an LEA officer was present as adviser or clerk to the Board of Governors.



**5.23 Incidence of contact by Chair and the LEA through Diary analysis over a 4 week period**

Diarist	Number of entries	Number of entries identifying Contact with LEA	%
1	16	9	55%
2	15	6	48%
3	5	2	40%
4	18	2	10%
5	56	23	40%
6	11	6	55%

From Table 5.23, it can be seen that the level of contact with the LEA in a selected four week period chosen by the Chair is between 40-55% with the exception of diarist 4. This diarist is a Chair of governors of a High School in Northshire. This response therefore fits the profile of the survey data in that the Chairs view of Northshire LEA were less positive than other LEAs.

The rate of contact of 40%-55% is interestingly high given the context of the period in which the relationships between LEA and schools at a national level were being tested. This, together with the earlier quoted evidence of the LEA being the second source of contact for information and advice after the Head Teacher, illustrates that the Chair’s relationship with the LEA is one of mutual importance, both as a source of information and support but also as a sounding board for the ‘broader perspective’ when decisions are being made at the localised school level.

The importance of the LEA to Chairs was underlined by the Chairs responses to being asked “What would you like to see happen to make your role of Chair more effective?” Chairs made 95 comments covering 21 categories of response and the category which recorded the highest percentage response (17%) was “greater contact with the LEA”. It is significant to note that no chair from Northshire responded in this way.



**(d) Relations with DfEE**

The Department for Education and Employment has, it could be argued, undergone as much change as the local education authority in terms of its identity and responsibility. The difference lies in the centralized nature of its influence. Within a decade it changed from the Department for Education and Science to the Department of Education to the present title of DfEE. The change in name may be superficial, the change in role is more substantial.

Whitty, Power and Halpin (1998), in their examination of the restructuring of public education in England and Wales largely post 1979, commented:

“Despite Mr. Major’s assertion of trust in educational professionals, central government reduced their autonomy and enhanced its own powers in a number of significant ways and then strengthened its grip over the education service as a whole.... The main vehicle for this reassertion of state control is the National Curriculum.” (p20)

Whitty et al (1998) drew attention to another centralising influence.

“Central government exerts additional influence and a considerable degree of control over the work of schools and teachers through the mechanism of inspection. The significant expansion of school inspection in England and Wales during the first half of this decade.... has increased the public accountability of the education system, but almost always on the government’s terms rather than the profession.” (p20)

Through the National Curriculum and through inspection therefore, central government has increased its influence and control over the future direction of education. As the responsible arm of the government’s legislative intentions, the DfEE is seen to be a focal point of such developments.



This was recognised by Hustler et al (1995) in their interviews with Head Teachers and in their discussions with different educational partners. Whilst several of the Head Teachers were clearly pro DfEE (then DfE) due to their pro Grant Maintained stance, other Head Teachers of maintained schools were more objective. Hustler et al quote a sample of the Head Teachers thoughts on their relations with the DfEE.

“Too much paper and no one to mediate” (Head, girls school and VI Form, Birmingham.)

“I was on the National Curriculum Council for 2 years and found this very frustrating. That ‘s my direct work in a personal capacity.” (Head Comprehensive School, Shropshire.)

“The market system arising from 1988 Act has badly disabled inner city education and made our school .....a struggle”. (Head, Comprehensive school, Sheffield.)

How, therefore, did Chairs’ perceive their relationships with the DfEE? From the survey data, 55% of Chairs (N = 98) responding believed that there had been an increase in contact and communication whilst 26% of Chairs believed that there had been no change of substance.

Where the input lay in the Chair’s relations with the DfEE is illustrated by the following Table 5.24;

**5.24 Chairs’ attitudes to DfEE**

	Total
Better information	7
More information (not necessarily for the better)	10
More jargon in documents	13
More content	1
Too much responsibility from DfEE	1

A small percentage of Chairs (5%) responded in a less complementary way by emphasising the question “Who?”. Whilst allowing for a certain leeway in response,



this type of response does suggest a 'distancing' factor in terms of relationships between Chairs and the DfEE which cannot be bridged simply by the provision of documentation.

Even so, the relationships with the DfEE could be improved by better communication. This was recognised by the Select Committee on Education and Employment in their report on the "Role of School Governor".(1999)

"We recommend that the DfEE establish a task force to improve the quality and reduce the quantity of paperwork that governors receive....We expect that papers aimed at influencing governors should not contain educational jargon and 'teacher speak'". (p 31)

Of all players in the educational field, the DfEE, not surprisingly, was the one which the Chair of governors least related to. Yet, once again, this presents a particular dilemma. As demonstrated at the beginning of this section, certain commentators (Whitty et al, and Ball 1990; 1994) have argued that, whilst 'consumer sovereignty' has been prominent; eg school based management; through LMS and grant maintained status; through parental ballot; the real issue lies more with the centralising power of government over the future development of education. However, other aspects of educational legislation have given greater credibility to the role of governing bodies and in particular the role of the Chair of governors as referenced in chapters 2, 3 and 4.

The picture emerging from this research is somewhat different. Chairs acknowledge the existence of the DfEE as the provider of information and a structural framework of operation through the publication, 'Guide to the Law'. Chairs do not acknowledge the DfEE as a player/point of communication/sounding board in the day to day management of a school governing body. The relationship is too distant.



## **G. Positive Action? - How Chairs viewed their role in recent years**

### **1. Context**

Change has been an ever present theme in education since the 1988 Education Reform Act. 'Change' has been the underpinning constant factor, in an ironic way, which has created the context for the emphasis on the educational environment 'curriculum' in the 1980's and 'effectiveness' in the late 90's.

People react to and cope with change in a variety of ways. Morrison (1998) in his discussions on individual motivation for and against change, identifies a number of models which contextualise change. (Senge 1990, Jordison 1991 Harris 1987). In essence, they all share a similar continuum through a number of stages. For example, Morrison states

“Jordison (1991) suggests a continuum of reactions to change including  
1) acceptance (being enthusiastic and co-operative, through acceptance under pressure to acceptance through resignation); 2) indifference (apathy, loss of interest in work doing the minimum to get by); 3) passive resistance (doing as little as is possible); 4) active resistance (in go slow); 5) sabotage.”(p122)

He goes on to argue

“People's reaction to change vary in accordance with their perceptions of the change – whether they find it attractive, revolutionary – and whether they themselves are comfortable with change .... People's motivation to change is often a function of whether they regard change as an improvement; if they do not then some resistance can be anticipated.” (p 122)

This section reports on how Chairs felt about changes in recent years, what they felt was positive about their contribution as Chair and what they would like to happen to make their role more effective.



## 2. Attitude to change

Using a more simplistic model than Jordison et al, Chairs were asked to identify how they felt about change in recent years using a scale of 1) indifferent 2) reluctantly accepted 3) slightly overwhelmed and 4) Other (allowing a free response to be given).

The categories of Figure 5.25 (N=107) are not in as clear a continuum as other models and the results do not produce a clear picture of Chairs' views but rather a fairly balanced mix. Just under one quarter of Chairs responding were indifferent to the changes, one quarter were slightly overwhelmed whilst just over a third reluctantly accepted the changes.

Out of the 16 Chairs who ticked the 'other' column, only 10 made a comment of which 6 reflected the view that the changes were generally accepted.

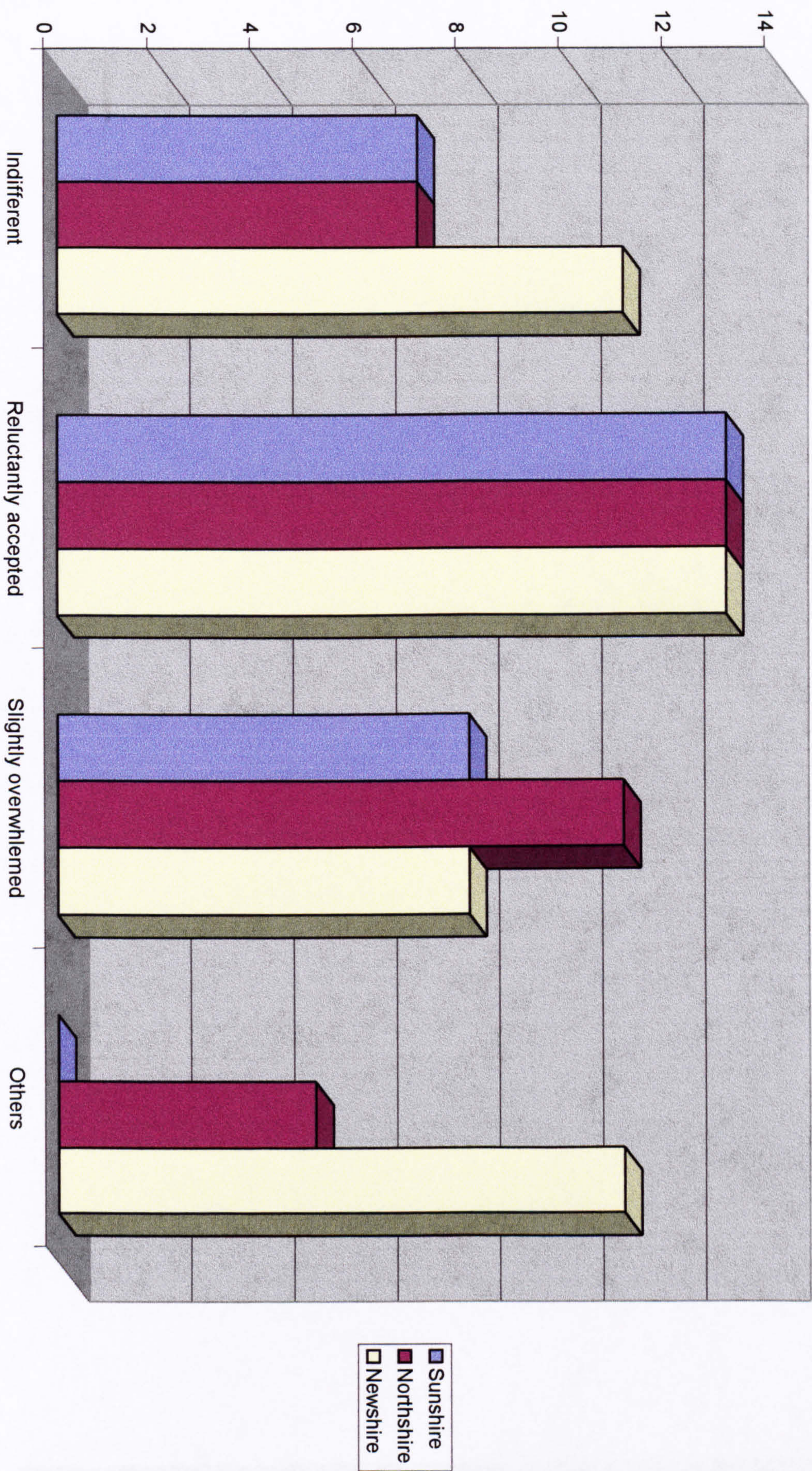
One Chair from Newshire made a particularly pertinent comment on the options from which the choice had to be made in the survey.

“The question presupposes significant change and assumes that they (the changes) are negative. Over the last five years I do not think either of these are true. Over the last sixteen years, the greater involvement of governors has been a good thing”. (Chair, Newshire 32)

The view emerging from the survey data therefore points to an acceptance of change but an acceptance tinged with problematic concerns.



5.25. Chairs' Attitudes to Change





**3. Chairs views on what they felt were the positive aspects of their role**

Whilst Chairs may have had a mixed view of the changes in education and their role in the governing body in recent years, the evidence from survey data and diary data points to Chairs expressing very positive views about their role.

The six Chairs who kept diaries for a period of four weeks at different times throughout the fieldwork research were asked to record their feelings as to the action they took on the event they were recording. Chairs were asked to tick one of the following categories; very positive; positive; unclear; unhappy.

Figure 5.26 illustrates the findings in this particular issue.

**5.26 Chairs views of actions taken from diary recordings**

	Number of Entries	Very Positive	Positive	Unclear	Unhappy
Diarist 1	16	3	9	2	2
2	14	5	8	1	0
3	5	4	1	0	0
4	18	7	11	0	0
5	48	31	16	0	1
6	11	5	4	0	2
Total	112	55	49	3	5
%	100	49%	44%	3%	4%

Figure 5.26 clearly demonstrates that, in an overwhelming number of instances, Chairs felt positive about their actions. These actions covered a very wide range of events from meetings of the governing body, meetings with the Head Teacher and senior management, telephone calls to the LEA, meeting with parents, meetings with staff and special meetings to deal with pupil disciplinary matters. The events recorded as ‘unclear’ related to a particular school visit and two telephone conversations with a Head



Teacher. The events recorded as ‘unhappy’ referred to two meetings of the committee of the governing body that were inquorate, a visit to school to examine applications for a senior post which drew limited applications, a telephone call to the LEA and an incident of teacher assault on a pupil.

The evidence related to the contemporary events that Chairs recorded over a short specific period. The evidence from the survey data asked Chairs to reflect over a longer period as to what they felt was the positive aspect of their role as Chair. This section of the survey elicited the largest number of responses in the ‘written’ category ie where Chairs were asked to make a comment as opposed to ticking an alternative. The number of responses was 132. Figure 5.27 (N=132) illustrates the range of responses. For ease of reporting, only those areas receiving two or more responses are listed in Figure 5.27.

**5.27 Chairs’ views of ‘positive’ development in their role**

Area of response	Number of responses
Able to contribute to development of Governing Body	21
Developments in school relating to pupils and staff	20
Good working relationships in school	15
‘Good’ OFSTED	13
Being involved in the life of the school	11
Good working relationships with Head Teacher	9
Being in a position to help to solve problems	5
Improved examination results	4
Improving teamwork and trust	4
Promoting a sense of progression	3
Being involved in a period of whole school development	3
Sense of satisfaction	3
Increased knowledge of education matters	2
Other (comments referring to issues raised only once)	19

The remainder of the responses – 19 – covered 19 separate topics ranging from



“Investment in People” status, establishing a new nursery to extra spending on ICT. The single responses reflected specific intentions rather than the more general ‘whole school governing body’ issues.

Clearly, in any analysis, there is potential overlap. The categories identified in Figure 5.27 resulted from a careful analysis of all responses from one LEA and attributing them to general categories. A process of further refinement took place once responses from all three LEAs were analysed. The majority of responses from Chairs were related to relationships, whether amongst the members of the governing body, between the Chair, governors and staff, between the Chair, governors and Head Teacher or being involved in the life of the school and contributing to the wellbeing and progress of pupils. Chairs judged their success in terms of establishing, maintaining and developing relationships between all parties. The importance of this role in the continuous development of the governing body was widely acknowledged.

“It’s the support of the governing body as we have become more professional in the way we conduct our business.” (Chair, primary school in Newshire : 34)

“It’s a feeling that I have made an impact and enabled governors to play a role”. (Chair, primary school in Newshire :48)

It’s creating a climate of positiveness and teamwork in a fragmented governing body – we nearly opted out”. (Chair, middle school in Northshire : 26)

“It’s governors acting as a real team – bonding forged in adversity” (Chair, primary school in Northshire : 43)

However, some Chair’s comments were double-edged.

“It’s working with a great bunch of people – two LEA governors apart (plonkers!). (Chair, first school in Northshire : 23)

It is noteworthy that only 11% of Chairs referred to OFSTED in their comments. It is logical that a good OFSTED report would be good news for the school and for the LEA but only 11% of Chairs felt that this was worthy of mention as an issue on itself. One explanation may be that Chair’s measure their contribution to the work of the



governing body by longer lasting matters which help lay the foundation for future developments rather than the mechanistic preparations for an OFSTED inspection. This finding also has to be seen in relation to the response OFSTED received when Chairs were asked to identify pressures on governing bodies and on their own role.

**4. Chairs views – making their role more effective**

In responding to this area of the study, Chairs were less forthcoming in their responses in the survey than to the positive aspect of being a Chair. There was a total of 95 responses as opposed to 132. The responses also ranged over a number of areas. Table 5.28 illustrates the range of responses. Once again, only areas receiving two or more responses are recorded in the table.

**5.28 Chairs’ view as to how to make their role more effective**

Topic	Number of responses
Greater contact with LEA	16
Training for Chairs	15
Financial/budget support	13
More effective governors	7
Less legislation	6
More time to spend on Governing Body business	6
Payment for governors/help with telephone bills/ Administrative support	5
Less influence/direction from DfEE	5
Better communication/information in and to Governing Body	5
Paid time off work for governors	3
More involvement in life of school	3
Total	84
Other individual responses	11
Total	95

It can be seen from Figure 5.28 that the role of the LEA in this study is integral to Chairs’ views as to future effectiveness in their role. This is evident not only from Chairs wishing for greater contact with the LEA but also through a possible role in offering training for Chairs and in offering financial budget support. This observation, however, needs to be considered critically. The level of responses illustrated here may



reflect a previous negative attitude toward the role of the LEA and by listing such points, they are identifying a need not presently provided. At the same time, it could be argued that this was once the case but the strain on LEA-school relationships post –1988 has had an adverse effect on the provision of such areas of support and training. A further observation needs to be noted. The top three elements identified in Table 5.28 reflect the Chairs view from the three LEAs which took part in the survey, yet in the top element ‘Greater contact with LEA’, there was no response from Northshire LEA. The figure of 16 therefore reflects only two LEAs whilst the areas which came second and third had responses from all three LEAs.

Nevertheless, Chairs, by so responding, have identified an ‘action plan’ for future governing body development in improving relationships/contact with the LEA, by improving information to their governing body and to improve communication between all parties.

The evidence from the interviews was equally varied on this issue. In fact, there was a surprising range of views. These ranged from a considered reflection upon the ‘necessity of governing bodies at all’ to ‘no change’ to ‘considered change about information access’.

“I have reservations about the role of the governing body altogether, whether they should exist at all. I think probably with hindsight I see no use for them at all and I would much rather schools were formally managed by the LEA. I think as an exercise in democracy that they are a failure really”.

(Chair, primary school Newshire – Interview 4)

This view particularly reflects the argument of Deem et al (1995) in the concept of active citizenship and school governance in that the changes in school governance haven’t empowered governors as such but have inadvertently further empowered Head Teachers. Moreover, whilst this Chair’s views may be considered as ‘defeatist’ in terms of the adventure in school based management, his views do coincide with the survey’s



results in the need to have a closer contact with the LEA. Deem et al (1995) also highlight this point although it is not specific to the LEA.

“What can be done to preserve democracy in the governance of schools, as well as other public services, is to retain some intermediary democratic layer between site-based management and government. It is precisely this layer which the UK, New Zealand and Australia reforms have tried to reduce or eliminate”. (p168)

Another Chair was more positive but in a neutral way

“What changes would I like to see to the role? I’m reasonably comfortable in the role of Chairman. I don’t think that you can make many changes to it. The Chair is there to perform a function ... I don’t think the Chair’s opinion is more valuable than anybody else’s”. (Chair - Interview 5)

This Chair reflected the democratic element of being a school governor as a first concern. Another Chair expressed a more forthright view in terms of the Chairs’ expectations of equal treatment with Head Teachers relating to access to information.

“I think that whilst some Chairs are aware of where they can get information from the DfEE etc, I don’t think that Local Authorities, DfEE and all the various bodies make sure that the Chairman gets as much information – I know its more and more paperwork but I think at times that we aren’t as readily and quickly informed as we should be. Yes, the Head is running the school and is responsible for day to day [matters].....but I think the Chair has a right for the same sort of information as far as possible regarding the business of running the school”.  
(Chair High school Northshire – Interview 3)

A similar point was made by another Chair from Northshire.

“I think the weakest thing is sometimes I feel we are not told everything. I don’t feel that from a personal point of view but I know from my husband who is Chair of governors about the wait involved because his Head Teacher makes decisions that the governors should be making. I know that goes on. I think it’s the teaching staff and the senior management that has to learn to work differently.” (Chair, primary school Northshire – Interview 11)

It is clear from the survey and interview evidence that Chairs feel that there is room for improvement in order for the Chair to be more effective. These can be categorised in several ways. Firstly, from “within the area of influence of Chairs”. That is, Chairs have the influence to develop involvement in the life of the school, more effective



governors, better communication in and to the governing body. By this, it is meant that the Chair can use his or her position to begin to make such things happen without dependence upon external bodies from the school.

A second category would be one where the Chair can be pro-active in working “within areas of influence that they have access to”, eg with the LEA for greater contact, greater financial/budget support, governor training organisations to support and provide training for Chairs. The third category would be one in which the Chair alone will have little effect on ‘areas of influence’ largely because the route to access is either not there or not known eg less legislation from the Government, less influence/direction from DfEE, paid time off work for governors from their employers.

Chairs of governors, because they lack a local LEA- Chair network and they do not have access to any national network of Chairs of governors, feel isolated in their ability to influence events. By addressing those areas of action within their ‘area of influence’ first, then the possibilities for further contact with those ‘areas of influence’ outside their immediate role are opened up.

## **H. Chairs and the setting of personal targets**

### **1. Context**

Target setting has become the focal point, if not a fundamental point, of the present Government’s drive to raise standards. LEAs are required to agree and set targets with schools in relation to literacy and numeracy; national targets are set for each key stage and target setting is permeating Head Teachers salary assessments. If current thinking remains unchanged, performance management will become the norm rather than the exception in schools in the near future. Whilst there are no targets set for governing bodies as such, it is the responsibility of governing bodies to ensure that there are strategies in place in each individual school to try and reach the set targets.

For instance, in the national Numeracy Strategy, the governing body has a crucial role to play. This is clearly stated in DfEE guidance to the ‘Numeracy Governor’



**“Together, the governing body and the head teacher share responsibility for strategic planning, including the setting of realistic yet challenging school targets for mathematics. Not all children in KS2 will achieve the national target. Some schools ought to do better and some might not quite be able to manage it. What is really important is that in your school there is a clear upward trend even if there is some fluctuation from year to year.” (p 14).**

**Governing bodies, however, do not have targets set for them to measure their own performance. What therefore, are the views of Chairs in relation to personal targets, either for themselves or the governing body or for the school?**

**From the interviews with Chairs, there was no clear picture emerging about target setting. Whilst some Chairs set personal targets others set no targets and others had no targets other than their school targets.**

**“I have to confess I haven’t set any formal targets for myself. We expect our head and teachers to set them. Certainly I want to consolidate our financial position.....and I want to build on a good OFSTED report.... Beyond that I have not set any personal targets.”**

**(Chair, primary school, Northshire – Interview 11)**

**“I don’t think I have any personal targets to achieve other than the plans that we have with the school development plan.....obviously a lot depends on outside influences, particularly finance in many cases but whenever we set targets we give ourselves tasks that we get though to a satisfactory conclusion or a very good reason why we can’t reach that.”**

**(Chair , High School – Northshire – Interview 3)**

**These two Chairs did not put a priority upon personal targets but identified ‘targets’ within the overall target setting of the school.**

**It is right and proper that Chairs should relate the national target setting to the context of the governing body. Yet, in spite of the national agenda, should Chairs have a personal agenda for achievement? Clearly, some Chairs think so.**

**“I think my personal target is to make everyone involved. My main target for the school is to be the best”.**

**(Chair, primary school in Northshire Interview 3)**

**“Well I suppose a personal target would be to feel that by the time I get to the end of my term of office the rest of the governors, and by implication, the school, felt that I have served them properly and that if I’ve done anything in any of the meetings, people can perceive that it has only been from an intention to assist the**



school and not to have a sense of personal triumph about any point that's been discussed."

(Chair, Special School – Interview 5)

One Chair, however, reflected upon the difficulties that can be generated by having personal targets to reach but not being able to achieve them.

"I wouldn't go so far as to actually say that these were targets. I had some ideas about how I wanted to do what I did and that was to do in relation with, well there were a few things I wanted to do. One is my relationship with the Head, I wanted that to change. I was wanting to influence the school on exclusions. My view is that the Head Teacher will feel that he has managed me, that I was a Chair who has been and gone so I don't think I've managed to have the kind of impact I thought I might have had".

(Chair, Primary School, Newshire – Interview 4)

This Chair clearly felt some frustration in not achieving what he set out to achieve yet in other areas of the work of the school governing body, he did feel a sense of satisfaction.

"Having said that, it's (the governing body) well attended, all the vacancies are filled, are committees are staffed. I mean the business gets done so it functions, but I'm not sure it's particularly effective."

From the interview data, therefore the setting of personal targets for Chairs to achieve is not generally evident. The targets that exist tend to be national targets, expected of schools and LEAs or school generated targets. The role of the Chair is not clear in this area.

This presents a dilemma. Expectations placed upon governing bodies in terms of fulfilling their duties and responsibilities are increasing. The role of the Head Teacher in improving school effectiveness is central to educational improvement initiatives.

Central government has set targets over a range of areas which need to be met within a specific time scale. The Chair of governors has been positioned, by incremental legislative steps, as central to the operation of the governing body – school – LEA relationships. The dilemma is that Chairs, despite seeing themselves as equal partners with Head Teachers, do not pro-actively promote the setting of targets for development. They either take a given lead or rely upon the Head Teacher. However, just as a Head Teacher 'leads' a school, a Chair should 'lead' the governing body.



Morrison (1999), in his analysis of teamwork reiterates the characteristics of an effective team leader as identified by Adair(1987) and Katzenbach and Smith (1993b). Amongst the eighteen characteristics are:

- an ability to enthuse team members.
- an ability to set directions and goals.
- an ability to lead by example.
- integrity.
- the ability to develop and build on the commitment and confidence of other team members
- an ability to set the direction of the team.
- flexibility in style of leadership.
- an ability to set and achieve high standard both personally and for members of the team (p 194)

Applying these characteristics to a Head Teacher as leader of the school, they fall comfortably within the OFSTED expectation of leadership and management and the DfEE requirements of the National Professional Qualification for Head Teacher. (NPQH). Applying these characteristics to a Chair of governors is more problematical.

The evidence presented can be likened to a mosaic – a picture comprising of varying and complex elements but nevertheless representing a whole figure or image. The evidence from the various sources presents different pictures at times but nevertheless all relate to the figure of the Chair of governors.

### **Generalisability of Research Findings**

#### **Context**

At the beginning of chapter 4, it was recognised that the research study was constrained by certain factors – resources, time and manageability. As such, it is necessary to



comment on the applicability of the research conclusions beyond the specific context of this study.

Deem and Brehony (1997), in their discussion on methodological issues in multiple site case studies, identify potential for disagreement about the wider reference of small scale research. They state:

“ Ozga (1990) argues that small-scale case studies in educational policy are of little use unless they also take into account macro-concepts and entities like the State, because only thus can the contradictory aspects of educational reform be revealed. But are abstract theories of the State, which can never be fully empirically developed or tested, the only means of revealing contradictory elements in policy making? If the implication is that areas of every piece of case-study research in education should be accompanied by a contribution to the theory of the State ..... then this is problematical; it both devalues qualitative case study as a method and privileges macro-level theory over everything else.” (p 157 )

The natural constraints of this study would fall within Deem and Brehony's critique of Ozga- that this research is not accompanied by a fundamental contribution to the theory of the state. What can be said of this research is that it was undertaken within the context of policy evolution through a volatile period in the re-definition of the State and that the analysis of that change in terms of educational policy was outlined in chapter 3.

### **Methodological limitations in data collection**

#### **(a) General Characteristics**

The data collected for this study was derived from five sources – questionnaire, diary, interviews, observations and document analysis. The questionnaire was by far the most extensive instrument used in terms of sampling and the findings provided a useful basis for the use of further instruments in the research methodology such as interview



schedules and diary information, The spread of type of school from the responses received within the survey was generally proportionate to the national spread (Infant and Junior schools: 100, Secondary schools : 22, Special : 7).

The analysis of gender from the questionnaire responses provided a ratio of 2.5:1 in favour of male Chairs. Without reference to national data on this issue, it is difficult to determine the relevance of the sample in relation to the findings. It is noticeable however, that this ratio, when disaggregated to age phase of school, was still applicable to the primary and special sector but not to the secondary sector. Within the secondary sector, the ratio was almost 3.5:1. Whether this statistic was sufficiently significant to affect the data was not tested. Suffice to say that the primary – secondary imbalance in terms of gender of Chairs of governing bodies is not a phenomenon local to this study only. Scanlon et al (1999) reported that only a quarter of secondary Chairs of governors were women compared to 37 per cent for primary schools. (p89)

Age analysis of Chairs in the study did not produce any different data from other relevant studies. Scanlon et al (1999) reported that eight out of ten Chairs were under 45 years of age. This study used different age parameters but only by a slight degree. By general trend, the results of this study showed that the majority of Chairs were post 50 in terms of age.

The conclusion to be reached, therefore, in terms of the general characteristics of the Chair of governors, is that they are not out with the norm of previous studies conducted on a greater scale.

#### **(b) Use of LEAs' - A Sample Base**

The sample of LEAs' chosen to be a part of this research was not a result of a methodological analysis of comparability alone. It has been shown in chapter 4 that the three LEAs' involved in the survey were selected more by willingness to participate than by random selection. Nevertheless, using the argument of Deem et al



(1995), the range of respondents presented a fair selection of Chairs in any LEA or LEAs as they are all subject to the same statutory framework.

The use of a fourth LEA in the interview, diary and observational data was also done for practical reasons of time and resources. This additional LEA proved to be a valuable source of data collection to match against the survey data. The fact that it was within the 'statistical neighbourhood' of the survey LEAs meant that there was no inherent deviation in the pattern of LEAs used. Indeed, if anything, this statistical correlation gives the findings more credibility.

### **(c) Research Instruments**

In any research, when a number of instruments are used, it is important to consider the weight attached to the findings emerging from each instrument. In this research the questionnaire was clearly the most extensive instrument used and it did provide a vast amount of data. Interviews and diaries were supplementary instruments to examine in more depth issues that arose from the analysis of the survey data.

The diary evidence was particularly valuable in giving an insight into the demands placed upon Chairs outside of the standard attendance at governors meetings and also in illustrating the nature of communication Chairs use and the contacts they make. This research may have benefited from a wider use of the diary as a research instrument.

### **(i) Survey**

It is acknowledged that the 43% return of the survey data was at the lower end of a validity threshold, yet within the bounds of being able to make particular conclusions.

The structure of the questionnaire had been tested with a sample group of Chairs and amended in the light of observations. However, on analysing the responses, it was clear that a number of questions failed to elicit an appropriate response due to the ambiguity



implicit in the question. This was particularly true of question 10 when Chairs were asked which of the following ‘may’ cause tensions between Head Teacher and Chair of governors. Response range included both ‘actual’ incidents and perceptions from Chairs of what could happen. It was difficult to disentangle the response to the question into ‘fact’ or ‘possibility’, thereby creating a degree of uncertainty in the validity of the overall response to this question.

The ‘open’ questions at the end of the questionnaire provided a rich data source with regard to Chairs views of relationships with fellow governors, the Head Teacher, the LEA and the DfEE. However, the contributions from the Chairs that responded varied. For instance, not every Chair responded by commenting on each area. Some recently appointed Chairs acknowledged that they found it difficult to respond to certain aspects whilst other Chairs were very forthcoming in their comments. In other words, given the overall response rate of 43%, given the varied but nevertheless general profusion of comments and given the unevenness of response, it would be difficult to generalise from such findings. The observations made earlier in this Chapter in relation to the aspects identified in the ‘open’ questions need to be seen in the local context of the three LEAs in the North East of England.

## **(ii) Interviews**

It is accepted that the sample of 12 was small and as such, caution needs to be exercised in drawing conclusions from this data alone. It is also acknowledged that the use of a ‘prompt’ – the questions to be asked being sent prior to interview – may have ‘conditioned’ the response to be made by the Chair. The view of every Chair interviewed, however, was that they found the prompt helpful to focus their own thoughts. Issues outside the boundaries of these prompts could have been and were discussed by Chairs.



The final issue is that of the role of the researcher in interviewing Chairs from his own LEA. In the survey data, the researcher did not have professional or working relationship with the LEAs involved. In the interview data, the researcher's own LEA was included. Since the researcher knew some of the Chairs interviewed through a professional role, it could be argued that the Chairs may have been less forthcoming and more accommodating in their response. Whilst this is a theoretical possibility, the reality of the situation would undermine any such argument. The stature of the position of the Chair of governors, the perception of their role vis a vis the Head Teacher and the realisation of the demands made upon them, clearly had an influence upon their generality of response to the researcher in this exercise. The 'professionalism' of the Chairs rose above any potential 'accommodation' in their responses.

### (iii) Diaries

The diaries proved to be a valuable source of data collection in that they were the personal product of each Chair. They were also useful in providing information over a four week period from each Chair at different times throughout the research project, thereby limiting the influence of any particularly current issue. A spread of LEAs was also useful but again, the introduction of a fourth LEA needs to be noted as a potential variable to the analysis. For practical reasons, the researcher's own LEA provided the majority of diary returns, reflecting the primary/secondary divide.

A further limiting factor, it could be argued, was the structure of the model diary. Each page for each entry was structured the same. There was no concession to presentation – merely the structure and format of the diary sheet by which Chairs were asked to record information. There was the limiting factor of constraining observations to the required format and indeed one Chair did comment that the space provided on the pro-forma for comments was limited.

Nevertheless, Chairs responded consistently to the format and one indulged in the need for more than one sheet per event. A further factor that needs to be considered,



however, was the ‘freedom of interpretation’ given to the Chairs in recording their entries. There was an interesting range of recording amongst Chairs completing the diaries. One Chair recorded every action to the exact minute whilst another Chair was fairly relaxed about diary entries. Whether this reflects the perceived sensitivity of the methodological approach or a more personal view of ‘diary keeping’ would be difficult to establish. However, the variation in Chairs recording schedules should result in treating the data with some caution.

**(iv) Governing Body Meetings – Observational data**

This data was very limited in its scope and therefore not on a par with other data collection. Due to time and resource constraints, only three governing body meetings were observed. They were within the author’s LEA and selected on the basis of a primary/secondary divide, an aided/maintained divide as well as a full governing body/committee divide. Access by means of permission of the Chair of governors, the Head Teacher and other governors, was not a problem.

Nevertheless, the information gleaned from recording schedules proved to be a useful addition to the overall data collection. It has to be acknowledged, however, that whilst the observation was a useful research instrument, the range of school governing bodies was limited and the ‘one off’ appearance of a researcher in the meeting may have had a restraining influence on participation from governors. If there had been sufficient time to ‘acclimatise’ the researcher to the researched, observational data may have been different. As it was, the data produced was very useful in providing, with other evidence, a composite picture of the role of the Chair of governors.

**(v) Documentary evidence**

The documentary analysis for this study was particularly thorough in terms of official documentation – Acts of Parliament, Statutory Instruments, Circulars and official memoranda. The minutes of meetings in Southshire LEA also provided



official memoranda. The minutes of meetings in Southshire LEA also provided valuable source data. Moreover, all interviews were recorded and transcribed and analysed for key themes.

The dilemma in analysing such documentary sources, however, is in the interpretation. It is acknowledged that, in analysing the educational legislation from 1979-1997, with an examination of legislation pre and post these dates, the focus of any analysis has been in seeking references to the role of the Chair of governors in the first instance and the role of the governing body in the second instance. Such focussed analysis may have missed a broader perspective which may have informed the final outcome. Furthermore, it is acknowledged that only the minutes of governing bodies in Southshire, the author's LEA, were examined. Access to other LEA minutes of governing bodies was limited due to the timescale of this study.

## **Conclusion**

One of the substantive points made in chapter 1 related to the context of change – “the speed of change is also a challenge” to the interpretation and analysis of texts on education in the past two decades. It is pertinent to reiterate this point at this stage.

West, writing as recently as 1993 states;

“The climate of education today has strong disintegrative forces within it. It reflects a confused culture which is emerging from one order to another; this new order is still formulating itself. This is not a new phenomenon, for every age has its cultural shifts and rebirth”. (p 152)

West was reflecting upon what she termed the ‘age of supreme individualism’, of which she had concerns. There is therefore a need, she argued, to examine the ‘value system’ in which education, given this wider social climate, needs to operate within.



**“The fact of change will not go away and it is inevitably the responsibility of school leaders to work to establish with colleagues and other stakeholders what values and forms of education need to be conserved or retrieved”. (p 153)**

**Among ‘colleagues’ or ‘other stakeholders’ is the Chair of governors.**

**“Chairs and heads need to manage the values of their governing bodies and to create opportunities for latent conflicts and concerns to emerge.” (p 155)**

**In West’s view therefore, within the ‘age of supreme individualism’ in which disintegrative forces operate, the role of Chair of governors, together with the Head Teacher, has a part to play in the re-examination of values which should create the climate in which education will operate.**

**The original research proposal was, as stated in chapter I, aimed at testing a proposition which West tends to assume – the growth in the significant role of the Chair of governors. The original proposition for this research was to question whether the constituency from which the Chair of governors is drawn from has changed and whether the role of Chair has changed since the introduction of local management of schools.**

**In essence, the underlying aim of this research has been to try and ‘position’ the figure of the Chair of governors in the management of education in a school system which is now locally managed. In 1977, the Taylor Report recommended the introduction of a ‘school governor’ system. A decade later, the Conservative Government introduced the 1988 Education Reform Act which put in place a system of local management of schools which reflected a broader political agenda in terms of the mix of ‘devolution’ and ‘market system’ approach to social and economic constructs.**

**The role of the governing body was central to this ‘climatic’ change. A decade on, the ‘Standards and Framework Act’ 1998 also addresses the role of the governing body but**



with a different emphasis – one concentrating upon the raising of standards and increasing school effectiveness.

The timespan of this outline covers just over 20 years. The period began in the last years of a struggling Labour Government, the ERA was passed in the midst of a radical Conservative social, political and economic agenda and the last reference to the Standards and Framework Act is the result of a re-born New Labour administration. The continuity over a period of 20 years in educational thinking and practice is, therefore, not evident. However, this belies the fact that, for a lengthy period of that time – from 1979 to 1997 – there was a consistency of approach toward the operation of a ‘market economy’ philosophy within educational development. The point at issue here is that the period covered in the analysis of documentation and research - since 1977 – is marked by a beginning and end which share the same political persuasion but which are different in terms of a developing ideological stance whilst the vast part of the middle era was different again due to the Conservative Government agenda.

If a by-product of this ‘change process’ was that the governing body became an organisation central to the delivery of a new system of education, it does not appear to be a long planned process. It is rather a result of ‘incremental drift’. If the governing body role has emerged, then the role of Chair of governors has ‘emerged’ as an unplanned part of this process.

The cumulative importance given to the role of Chair continues apace. In one of the potentially most contentious areas of recent change in education – the introduction of performance management for teachers – the DfEE has placed the role of the governing body central to the whole process. The draft guidance states;

“The governing body has a strategic role. The context for the performance management policy is set by the school’s development plan which is agreed by the



governing body ..... In addition, the governing body has a duty to review the Head Teacher's performance, with the support of a trained external adviser". (p 6)

The consultative document also recommends the following:

"If a teacher is dissatisfied with aspects of his or her review, the issue can be raised with the head. If a head is dissatisfied with aspects of his or her review, the issue can be raised with the Chair of governors". (p 6)

In other words, if the Head Teacher, the most influential and powerful individual in the school organisation in terms of improving the effectiveness of a school, has a problem with his or her performance review, the person that has to resolve it is the Chair of governors. Clearly, in such instances, the Chair of governors needs to exercise the wisdom of Solomon!

In the analysis of data reported earlier in this chapter, reference was made to an interview with a Chair of governors of a school in Southshire. The particular issue was the Chair's perceptions of her role and how it had changed. She stated:

"Well, I think the role of Chairman is the fairly constant thing but the sorts of issue that schools or governing bodies are called on to address these days has changed..."

(Chair, special school in Southshire – Interview 5)

In other words, has the role of Chair itself changed or has the role of Chair largely stayed the same but all around it has changed? In one sense, it could be argued the function of a Chair has not changed dramatically. From this perspective, the function of the Chair is to structure the business of a meeting and conduct it accordingly. Indeed, according to Crew (1924) 'Procedures at Meetings' written as early as 1910 and revised in 1924, the role of the Chair at meetings is clearly laid out. It can be summarised as follows;

- To see that the meeting is properly constituted.
- To take care that all the requirements, whether statutory policy,



standing orders and regulations, are duly observed.

- To see that the items of business are taken in the order set out in the agenda paper.
- To take care that there is sufficient opportunity is given to those who wish to speak to express their views.
- To allow no discussion unless there is some motion before the meeting.
- To prevent irrelevant discussion.
- To take sense of the meeting by putting the motions and amendments in proper form (p 18 - 19)

It would be difficult for a Chair of governors of a school in the late 1990's or early 2000 to disagree with that analysis as a core function of a Chair at a meeting of the governing body. Whilst technically correct in interpreting the role of Chair, this perspective however, is too narrow. In another sense, it could be argued that the role of the Chair has changed dramatically. From this perspective, the role of the Chair has 'emerged' as a key player in the 'power politics' of the education system at the micro level of the school as well as at the semi-macro level of the LEA (assuming that the macro level is national government).



## **CHAPTER 6**

### **CONCLUSIONS AND OBSERVATIONS ON FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS**

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter is to report the conclusions to be drawn from this study and to offer some observations as to the future developments in the role of the Chair of governors.

The results of this study show that Chairs of governing bodies, in general, believe that the Chair has emerged as a key player in the power politics of education at a local level. A number of conclusions can be made based on the results from the research instruments used in this study. These conclusions, however, must be seen within the context of the localised nature of the study. The LEAs' in the study did have a commonality in not only being 'statistical neighbours' but also in other characteristics such as the lack of GM schools, a close LEA-school relationship and a Labour controlled local authority. As such, it is not possible to generalise from the localised nature of these conclusions.

#### **Conclusions**

##### **(i) The Chair as a 'key player'**

First and foremost, the majority of Chairs saw themselves as key players, in conjunction with the Head, in carrying out responsibilities on behalf of the school. Whilst the Head Teacher has the responsibility of day to day management, the governing body has the overall strategic responsibility. In reality, this is often conditional upon the Chair's role vis a vis the Head Teacher and the working practices adopted.

As reported in the analysis of data in chapter 5, 51% of Chairs believed that their role was one of 'mutual supporter' with the Head Teacher and 29% stated that their position mirrored more the general strategy being devised by the governing body



and day to day management under the control of the Head whilst 20% stated that they felt the Head was their professional adviser.

The interviews with Chairs of governors gives further weight to this conclusion when the transcribed texts are further analysed. In some instances, the language used by Chairs is indicative of their perception of their role; ie the use of the personal pronoun. One Chair, when asked about difficult situations he has had to face as Chair, comments:

“...I just expressed my views very forcefully and the most difficult decision was basically as a member of an interview panel when I clashed with the Head Teacher about who should be appointed from a shortlist of three. The cause of the tension was because we disagreed – I was interviewing with the Head Teacher and the Deputy Head Teacher at the time and I was in a minority of one and I was not prepared to sanction the appointment of the person they wanted...”

(Chair, Middle School, Newshire – Interview 6)

Another Chair, when asked, ‘How do you plan for Governors’ meetings?’ stated confidently;

“I plan with the Head Teacher and we draw up the agenda together. I will go in a couple of days before and draw that up and I say, ‘shall we put this on?, “I think we need to do this”..... I can’t stand governors meetings going on for three hours, its just ludicrous and I object to documents being placed in front of me that I haven’t seen before, wanting a decision to be made. I just won’t make it .... I will not have it, so I insist we meet beforehand and discuss things....”

(Chair – Primary School, Northshire – Interview 11)

The language used, both in its descriptive manner and its personal emphasis, gives an indication of where Chairs’ position themselves in relation to the Head Teacher. They are clearly not a body of individuals who will automatically defer to the role of the Head Teachers.

Huckman (1994) concluded that:

“The findings of research suggest that extending governors’ responsibility in the areas of curriculum, finance and staffing has not provided lay governors with a clearer base of authority. It would seem that these additional responsibilities have made them more reliant than before on information and



guidance from the head teacher and professional members. The balance of power on governing bodies and levels of participation remain unequal....”  
(p 160)

This conclusion was supported by Levacic (1995)

“It can therefore be concluded that local management has significantly changed the role of the head teacher and made it more complex. It has increased the power of head teachers, both ‘de jure’ and ‘de facto’, as they in practice, exercise the power given by the legislation to governing bodies”.  
(p 136)

Similar conclusions are reached by Deem et al (1995) and Thody (1994).

One conclusion of this research, however, is that the ‘emerging’ role of the Chair of governors is a counterpoint to the continued realisation of power and authority in the hands of the Head Teacher vis a vis governing bodies. It is not the purpose of this research to re-assess the power play between Head Teacher and the whole governing body. Nevertheless, in researching the role of the Chair of governors, it is evident that, whilst the references to Head Teacher –governing body relationships in other research refer to an imbalanced power relationship in favour of the Head Teacher, this ‘generalist’ view of the governing body may have to be revised in the light of the specific role of the Chair of governors.

Deem et al (1995) state;

“Furthermore, the failure of policy texts and popular discourses to capture the complexities of relation of power, specify the meaning of governor empowerment and identify the agencies which are to empower new lay governors, all combine with other organisational barriers to ensure that relations of power in the governance of schools, while undoubtedly still fragile and diffuse, have not enabled many newly active citizens to move



from formal to substantive realisation of their citizenry potential in the arena of education” (p 155)

Once again, this statement may still be applicable to the generality of governors today. However, the investigation of the relations of power between the Chair and Head Teacher, the realisation of Chair empowerment through consecutive legislative programmes and the emergence of a substantive realisation of Chairs’ citizenry potential, all combine to require a modification and a specification of the role of the Chair as distinct from the remaining members of a governing body.

**(ii) The Chair and Head Teacher relationship – the lack of substantive tension**

A second conclusion from this research relates to the potential for tension in the relationship between the Chair and Head Teacher. Whilst Chairs acknowledged that there was potential for tension in the relationship, the evidence from this research indicates that the scale of it is not as great as might have been expected given the increasing role of the Chair of governors. The tensions that did exist were largely to do with relationships eg the ability to work together was not evident. Either there was insufficient trust in the relationship or there was a different order of priorities. Furthermore, where tension in relationships existed, this could be further exacerbated by the policy development of the governing body. That is, the requirement of the governing body to consider policies on a whole of range of issues, such as appointment of staff and budget allocation, often had a detrimental effect on already strained relationships. The nature of the Chair – Head Teacher relationship often determined how effective policy development was. The development of policy rarely had an adverse effect upon a steady, mutually supportive relationship. As Grace (1995) argued, for most Head Teachers, the key



issue in the power relation of school leadership was whether or not harmonious working relations could be established with the Chair of the governing body who was seen as a strategic power holder (p 86).

The evidence from this study also suggested, however, that where tension existed, it was largely overcome. This was due, in no small part, to the pro-active role taken by the Chair to resolve any difficulty that may have existed. The interviews with Chairs clearly identify the thought, care and consideration that Chairs bring to the business of the governing body and in particular the relationship with the Head Teacher. The diary entries also illustrated the pro-activity of Chairs in progressing issues which required resolution. The evidence therefore gives substance to the initial conclusion of the centrality of the Chairs role in the workings of the governing body and that the power relationship between the Head and Chairs is one of more intricate nature than that with the generality of the governing body. Scanlon et al (1999) concluded in similar terms in relation to the role of the governing body in school effectiveness.

“Having a skilled and committed Chair is an important factor in governing body effectiveness. It is difficult for a governing body to improve or become more effective if the role of the Chair is poorly enacted. The Chair needs to be able to build a good relationship with the Head, while at the same time enabling other governors to play key roles in the work of the governing body.” (p 5)

### **(iii) The Chairs’ ability to cope with pressure**

A third conclusion relates to pressures faced by Chairs through the pace of change and the nature of change. It is acknowledged by Chairs that the amount of time spent and the workload undertaken has increased since the introduction of LMS. Scanlons et al’s research (1999) reported that three quarters of Chairs felt that the



workload was 'reasonable'. From the responses to the questionnaire, diary and interview data, it is evident that whilst there are pressures placed upon Chairs of governors, it would appear that they are not insurmountable. Indeed, it could be argued that Chairs cope well with the pressures that are put upon them from within the governing body as well as pressures exerted that are external to the governing body. Out of 121 Chairs responding to the questionnaire on this issue, only 54 responses were identified which produced thirteen categories of response of which only seven collected more than one response. Two areas of response were specific to the individual Chair ie. family and work commitment which created additional pressure in spending time away from home and work and pressure caused by concern over their own performance as Chair in meetings.

In essence, Chairs felt that they not only coped with the pressure of the role but coped well. The responses in interview and data from diaries indicate a relatively high level of confidence in the ability to take on responsibility and to be pro active in the progression of business both in the conduct of the business of a meeting and in the execution of other duties as Chair of governors. The diary evidence particularly indicates the range of authority in the role of the Chair and also indicates a level of pro-activity which belies a certain level of confidence.

Scanlon et al(1999) reported that the majority of Chairs were well-educated with a wide range of qualifications, that two thirds were in full or part-time employment and that the Chairs tended to be of a more mature age (including retirement) than the generality of governors.

Such findings as established by Scanlon et al, together with the findings of this research in relation to pressures, do indicate that Chairs have the ability to cope with the pressure that changing circumstances bring. A surprising outcome was the absence of pressure being felt from external agencies such as OFSTED. In terms of



OFSTED being a factor that was numerically counted from the returns from Chairs to the questionnaire, it was of little consequence.

Cromley-Hawke (1998), in researching the teachers' view of OFSTED concludes:

“Initial rejection, side-lining and resentment at perceived misdirected state criticism would appear to be moderating. In many cases, OFSTED and inspectors seem to be becoming institutionalised within the teaching profession and to be increasingly valued, albeit from a low starting base. The potential for ‘improvement through inspection is being increasingly recognised by many groups within schools” (p138)

From the evidence of this study Chairs of governors are amongst the ‘many groups’ within schools.

**(iv) The Chairs’ role in relation to the effectiveness of the governing body**

A fourth conclusion relates to the role of the Chair and their perceptions of the effectiveness of the governing body. The findings of Sammons et al (1995) in listing the key characteristics of effective schools, gave no mention to the role of the governing body. ‘Professional leadership’ and ‘shared vision and goals’ are interpreted solely in terms of the Head Teacher and senior management teams in their contribution to school effectiveness. The other key characteristics relate directly to teaching – learning in the classroom and the involvement of parents.

Scanlon et al (1999) found otherwise;

“a clear association between effective schools and effective governing bodies and that there were considerable benefits to be derived to a school and in particular its head teacher, from having an effective governing body.” (p 4)

The Select Committee of the House of Commons on Education and Employment produced a report on “The role of School Governors” (1999) in which it Concluded;



“...we firmly believe that governors have an important role to play in improving schools” (p XXXIV)

Furthermore,

“We support the Government’s emphasis that the governing body’s main purpose should be helping to raise standards of achievement.” (p XXXVII)

Finally,

“We firmly believe that money targeted at improving the effectiveness of the governing body will do much to improve the effectiveness of the school as a whole.” (p XIII)

In this research, evidence has been presented to illustrate that Chairs, in general, perceived their governing bodies to be within the range of “effective in most areas” to “effective in all areas”. These perceptions were based on a mix of Chairs’ personal assessments, a recent or past OFSTED report, being Chair of a ‘good’ school or improving results in external tests.

Yet the results of the research also pointed to a lack of a systematic means to test not only their own effectiveness as Chair but also the effectiveness of the governing body. As reported in chapter 5, there was a mismatch in Chairs’ views of the governors’ role in strategic planning and the findings of OFSTED inspections when reporting on this area.

The results of this research show that the measurement of effectiveness is a personal construct of each individual Chair using a varying mix of personal, school and third party (OFSTED, parents) measurements. At the time of the field research, the present emphasis of school targets in relation to numeracy and literacy levels was not as evident as it is today. The exploration of school self-review was at a relatively early stage whilst reviewing school progress in relation to the School Development Plan (SDP) was a well understood concept as was the inspection regime under OFSTED.



Since the field work research, a number of instruments have been devised to assist in the identification of governing body effectiveness and the integration into the Inspection Framework of a requirement to report on the effectiveness of the governing body from January 2000 has meant that Chairs will need to pay more attention to ways of measuring their own effectiveness as well as the governing body's rather than be reliant upon 'personal constructs'.

#### **(v) Training and support for Chairs' of governing bodies**

This issue is linked to the fifth conclusion which relates to support and training for governing bodies and Chairs. The evidence from this research suggests that Chairs recognise the significance of training but, in reality, were willing to limit its potential to develop both the governing body as a whole and Chairs in particular due to funds and time. One of the fundamental concerns arising from this research was the lack of Chairs accessing training opportunities specific to their role. Head Teachers have long had access to in-service support and to a certain extent, professional support in their role. In recent years, both Headlamp and the National Professional Qualification for Head Teachers recognised the significance of such professional development. Whilst it is acknowledged that such support is linked to professional and career development and is integral to the effectiveness of headship, there is nothing at all for the development and support to Chairs on a comparable scale. There has been no recognition of the need for such support and training for Chairs. Indeed there has been an acceptance, conscious and unconscious, of the 'on-the-job' training.

The lack of appropriate training and support for Chairs is compounded by the 'relative isolation' of Chairs as a specific grouping of governors. That is, whilst a Chair of governors may elicit responses from the governing body on certain issues or from LEA officers, there is little evidence to show that Chairs talk to



other Chairs to any significant extent. This 'relative isolation' is not necessarily self-imposed. Rather, it operates as such because of a 'vacuum' at a local, regional and national level in terms of Chairs' networks. From the evidence, it is clear that Chairs do not talk to one another with any, if any, degree of frequency.

The report of House of Commons Select Committee on Education and Employment (1999) considered the training and support for governors and in particular Chairs.

The report stated;

“The quality and effectiveness of Chairs of governing bodies is an important factor in governing body effectiveness. Research by Scanlon et al found that it is difficult for a governing body to improve or become more effective if the role of Chair is poorly enacted.” (para 80 p XXXIII)

The Select Committee subsequently reported that training for Chairs should not be mandatory but that induction training for new appointed Chairs of governors be made a requirement. Furthermore, it reported that joint training for new Chairs and their Head Teacher would be particularly valuable. (para 82)

Given the positioning of the Chair of governors through the Government's incremental legislative developments and given the perception of Chairs' as equal partners with Head Teachers, the need for Chairs to view their own training and development on a more serious level is required together with the need to promote and plan the training needs of the whole governing body on a more systematic basis.

#### **(vi) Relationship between Chairs of governing bodies and the LEA**

A sixth conclusion from this research relates to the relationship between the Chair of governors and the LEA. Through the questionnaire and diary data and, to a lesser extent, the interview data, it is clear that Chairs welcome and value the advice and



guidance role of the LEA. This conclusion presents a quandary in so much as the thrust of the legislative powers since 1988 has been to minimise the role of the LEA and to delegate decision making powers – and finance – down to individual governing body level for them to determine the path to follow. Indeed, there has been a consistent attack upon the role of the LEA in its ability to function and deliver to a new agenda – a quasi-market agenda.

In essence, the role of the LEA never disappeared. Instead, in the traditions of a liberal – democratic society, it transformed itself, albeit through a slow process.

The LEA, as a model of monitor and adviser upon local educational matters, is one that is emerging with increasing acceptability. The new regime of LEA Inspections by OFSTED and the Audit Commission will test these roles.

The analysis of evidence in chapter 5 highlighted three areas of Chairs interaction with the LEA. First, as a provider of information second only to the Head Teacher, secondly through Chairs contact with the LEA officers as recorded through diary entries and thirdly, an amalgam of the first two, as an assist to improve the effectiveness of their role. Clearly, in the overall responses from Chairs from four metropolitan LEAs in the North East of England, the role of the LEA remains an important one despite the overt and covert ways in which the role of LEAs has been questioned in Government advisory circles in previous years.

Wood (1998), in discussing the relationships between schools and LEAs in relation to OFSTED and increased delegation comments.

“The relationship between the LEA and its schools is an important one and one which has undergone many changes in recent times. Having moved away from what, in the past, may have been seen as rather a patronistic role within the dependency culture, ways of working are now more commonly grounded in a commitment to partnership with schools. This partnership, which operates at a local level, often precedes from the basis of a shared value



system which is at the heart of the relationship between LEAs and schools”

(p 45)

Chairs of governors are at the heart of the ‘shared value system’ as much as Head Teachers. The legislative framework which now exists in terms of school governance places the Chair at the centre of a great deal of events. Whether the Chairs wish to be in that position is a matter of personal preference. What is concluded from the research data is that Chairs rely upon the LEA on what can be described as a multi-level basis. That is, Chairs can access individual officers from a range of departments for specific information, can often have direct access to the Director of Education and can be influential when considering a range of buy back services in conjunction with the full governing body. LEAs, in turn, have been careful to nurture close relationships with Chairs.

**(vii) Chairs and the operation of governing body business**

A seventh conclusion relates to the operational style of the Chair of governors in the meetings of the governing body. Scanlon et al (1999) concluded

“Having a skilled and committed Chair is another important factor in governing body effectiveness. The Chair needs to be able to build a good relationship with the head while at the same time enabling other governors to play key roles in the work of the governing body”. (p 63)

The conclusion to be drawn from this research is that Chairs held the perception that their own governing bodies were largely effective in the conduct of business, that their role was instrumental in the effectiveness and that they were generally ‘facilitative’ in conducting the business of the governing body in engaging other governors pro-activity in the development of their school.



There is also evidence to show that, whilst Chairs may perceive that they are 'facilitative' in their chairmanship, Chairs do use 'directive' means in order to manage the business of governing bodies but that 'direction' is not always overt. The Chairs interviewed as part of this research all appeared confident in their ability to be Chair with the exception of one who was still 'finding his way'. This confidence stemmed from a mix of personal characteristics, personal experience and professional expertise. This enabled the Chairs to appreciate that they had a 'partnership' role with Head Teachers, whilst acknowledging the professional role of the Head Teacher and also to understand when they needed to step in and exercise the authority of the role of Chair. From the interview and diary data, Chairs appeared to play more 'pro-active' role in determining the business of the governing body than perhaps the survey data showed.

The Chairs influence over the operational style of the governing body also needs to be seen in the context of the part they play in the committees of the governing body. The survey data showed that, in terms of the major committees, Finance and Staffing, 59% of Chairs acted as Chairs of these committees and 52% of Chairs acted as Chair of a Pay Policy Committee. It needs to be noted that the influence of the Chair can extend beyond the functioning of the termly meetings into the detailed work of the committees of the governing body. The potential of this to be all pervasive in unduly influencing the work of the governing body is worthy of further study.

### **Observations on the role of the Chair of Governors in the future.**

This research has attempted to demonstrate that the Chair of governors is an important player in the areas of school governance. The period which separates Kogan's et al's categorisation of Chairs (1984) and Shearn's et al (1995) categorisation of the relationship between Head Teacher and Chair is only a



decade. Yet within this period of time, the education landscape has undergone substantial change and upheaval and with it, the field of school governance. The composition and construction of and the control exercised by a governing body in 1984 was very different from that in the mid 1990's. The difference is even greater at the end of the 1990's. A prime recipient of the consequences of this change has been the Chair of governors.

It is the contention of this study that this change has not been the result of any logical forethought on behalf of the legislative process but as a consequence of the requirements to enact a series of uncoordinated educational legislative programmes.

The emergence of the power of the Chair has been a by-product of a broader educational rationale of each particular piece of legislation. Almost by default, the development of greater delegation of responsibility to school governing bodies has been the increase in the significance of the role of the Chair of governors. This has not been prepared for in terms of a support structure for Chairs. Locally, regionally and nationally, there is little or no evidence of a network to support Chairs of governors who have, by virtue of their role in law, substantial powers in which to exercise their authority if they so wished. Whilst the Head Teacher of a middle sized comprehensive school will have a budget of between £1½ - £2 million to manage, he or she has the integrated network of support from a senior management team, LEA officers, other Head Teacher colleagues and his or her national association. From the research presented in this study, such an extensive network of support for a Chair of a school with a similar budget does not exist.

If we accept Ball's (1994) assertion that 'the locus of control is ill-defined' in relation to the Head Teacher and governing body, then the emergence of the role of the Chair may assist in re-defining that relationship. Certainly, in Shearn et al's analysis (1995), models of relationships exist in which the role of the Head and



Chair was more akin to a partnership, yet the boundaries of responsibility remained fluid. If the concept of 'relative activism' (Grace 1995) is applied in association with the concept of 'new managerialism' (Deem et al 1995), then adaption of the concepts of 'significant others' (Ruddock 1995) and 'key players' (Esp and Saran 1995) lend themselves to the emergence of a recognisable force within the field of school governance at the micro level and as a result the 'locus of control' becomes slightly more defined.

Given the pace of educational change within a generation and given the 'swing of the pendulum' in political and social priorities, it is perhaps imprudent to forecast what may be the Chairs' role in future years to any degree of certainty.

However, from the observations presented in this research and the stated intention of present legislation, it is possible to identify some indicative trends. Firstly, it is clear, even at this point in time of writing, that the effects of the 1998 Standard and Framework Act, fundamentally reinforces the role of the governing body and underpins the infrastructure in the move to compare the effectiveness of schools. At the National Governors Council AGM 1999, in the absence of the Secretary of State for Education, a DfEE Director of Teachers, Peter Makeham, placed the recently published report of the House of Commons Select Committee on Education on 'The role of the School Governor' in context.

"All of you are making an immense contribution, in your own time, to one of our most important public services... Your help in raising standards and providing real equality of opportunity is fundamental to the goal of developing every young person's potential. Ministers agreed in the Department's (DfEE) response to the education sub committee (sic) report on the Role of School Governors that you have been insufficiently appreciated. You play a vital role and that role needs to be more widely recognised and valued." (Appendix B. Report of NGC Council meeting 20 November 1999)



The key role is evident in a number of ways as the new millennium dawns. Firstly, in relation to the revised ‘Guide to the Law’ documents. These were given legal sanction in January 2000 and present the accumulated knowledge of twenty three years of practical application since the publication of the Taylor Report in 1977. In the documents (separate Guides are issued for community, voluntary aided/foundation and community special schools), the role of the Chair of governors is clearly stated in a level of detail not mentioned in previous guides and is also further extended in relation to the Chair’s role in the performance monitoring of the Head Teacher. The significance of the role of the Chair is also recognised by new regulations covering the appointment of Chairs of governors for January 2000 in that all governors wishing to stand for election of Chair need to be identified on the relevant agenda item for the termly meeting (Section 4:31). This may appear to be a minor procedural point but, nevertheless, illustrates the level of thinking within the DfEE on the need to ensure correct procedure in the election of Chair of governors given their central role in the governing body. One further example will suffice to prove this point. In the revised ‘Guide to the Law’ for Voluntary Aided Schools, a summary of legal responsibilities is provided. This is divided into Head Teacher and governing body responsibilities.

A simple numerical count of the number of legal responsibilities for each provides the following figures:

Head Teacher	23
Governing Body	74

The summary is useful to the extent of identifying legal responsibilities but insufficient in identifying where the onus of work lies. The inference to be drawn from this research project is that the onus lies upon the Chair – Head Teacher/Chair



– Governing Body relationship with the role of Chair as a key factor in maintaining legal propriety (in association with the Clerk to the Governors!.)

The second key role is in the introduction of the concept of performance management for teachers and Head Teachers. Once again, to quote from the DfEE Director of Teachers at the National Governors Council meeting in November 1999 in relation to performance management;

“We want to be sure that you as governors have the knowledge and the confidence to play your part in the most fundamental reform of the teaching profession since state education began”. (Appendix B to the NGC report p 7)

The Director of Teachers then went on to outline the governing body’s role:

“The governing body’s role, would be to agree a performance management policy for its school consistent with the final framework... Governing bodies would need to decide which of the new allowances would apply to each management post in their school and to decide whether to establish any new leadership posts, how many to establish and who to appoint.” (Appendix 13 NGC Report p 5,6,7)

Clearly the role of the governing body is central to this ‘fundamental’ reform.

Central to the role of the governing body, as this research has attempted to demonstrate, is the Chair of governors and if the proposition is accepted, this role is of crucial significance in the success of such a fundamental reform. The guidance to governors on Performance Management reiterates the unique role of the Chair.

In answer to the question as to who is allowed to see the Head Teacher’s review statement, the guidance to governors on Performance Management (2000) states:

“Only two copies of the performance review statement should be made, one for the Chair of governing body and one for the Head ... The Chair



of governors must provide a summary of the Head Teacher's review statement to the Chief Education Officer on request or to education adviser specifically designated by the CEO. The Chair must also provide any review officer or new reviewer with a copy of the previous statement together with the objectives relating to that statement. The training and development annex should be sent by the Chair of governors to the person responsible for training and development within the school.  
(p 7-8)

Furthermore, the Chair has a role to play in hearing a complaint from the Head Teacher about their review statement if the Chair has not already participated in the review. Clearly, the role of the Chair is integral to the whole process of performance management.

The importance of the role of the Chair appears to be underpinned by another arm of the DfEE organisation and which also relates to the third key issue – the support that is deemed necessary for the Chair of governors to operate efficiently in the world of education beyond the statutory meetings of the governing body. In the establishment of an Advisory Group on Governance (AGOG), the School Government Team of the DfEE was clearly conscious of the House of Commons Select Committee on the 'Role of the School Governor', the pressure from the Governor organisations such as the National Governors Council and the National Association of Governors and Managers and from other sources such as Scanlon et al's research (1994).

In a draft strategy for governing training and support, the following 'curriculum' products were outlined by the Advisory Group on School Governors:

- |                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| <p><u>“Chairmanship</u></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- A national agreed set of core modules should be commissioned focusing on the skills required to improve the chairmanship of governing bodies. The course could be delivered to newly appointed or longer serving chairs. Committee chairman or individuals, considering chairmanship might also be included. This should be a priority.</li></ul> |
|-----------------------------|---|



Head and Chairs  
working together

- Another priority for a core module. Heads and chairs might attend a joint session to develop a common understanding about working together, as well as with the governing body and other staff.

Advanced chairmanship  
leadership skills

- One possibility might be to ask the National College for School Leadership to consider this issue in due course with key stakeholders.”  
(Annexe B – AGOG papers January 2000)

Such views, from a recognised branch of the DfEE, need to be welcomed as a significant shift in the thinking about support given to Chairs of governing bodies. Clearly however, if the perception of Chairs, as demonstrated in this research, is of a role central to the operation of a governing body and if the governing body’s effectiveness is to improve, then the leadership skills of Chairs need developing. If this conclusion is accepted, then this should determine the future agenda of developmental support for Chairs of governors.

Where next?

This research has attempted to explore the views of Chairs of governing bodies as to their role and their relationship with fellow governors, other Chairs, Head Teachers, the LEA and the DfEE. The ever-changing world of education means that the conclusions from this research will need to be reviewed and re-researched in the light of emerging developments. One recent example illustrates such a point. In the effort to cut down on the amount of documentation sent out by the DfEE on the vast array of initiatives and developments, the Secretary of State in a press release issued in May 2000 guaranteed to reduce by one third, the number of documents and by half the number of pages that are sent automatically to all schools in the next school year (September 2001). To do this, from September 2001,

“all heads and chairs of governors will be offered the option of



an electronic document service – a kind of personalised electronic in-tray – which will enable them to receive, scan and store documents electronically” (DfEE Press Release 1 June 2000 “More spending power for schools and less red tape”).

Chairs of governors, on par with Head Teachers, will now be part of the DfEE ICT revolution. The continuing tendency of the DfEE to see the Head Teacher and Chair of governors from the same viewpoint confirms the essential findings of this research and goes to confirm the need to perhaps ‘remodel’ the role of the Chair of governors. Should there be a minimum standard of experience or qualification for a Chair of governors? Is there a need to begin to ‘professionalise’ the role of Chair of governors through accreditation? Is there a need to begin a process of annually reviewing the performance of the governing body and, by implication, the Chair of governors in order to ensure that they are operating effectively? Should Chairs of governors be paid officers of the governing body? Should there be a national network of Chairs actively supported by the DfEE in order to ensure progression and efficiency in the national indicators and targets set? Should there be a system of experienced Chairs to act as mentors for newly appointed Chairs? Should there be a regulatory number of hours training which Chairs have to attend within the period of an academic year in order to maintain a high skill and knowledge level? Should there be a formal appraisal system for Chairs of governors similar to that introduced by the Lord Chancellor with regard to the chairmanship role in the magistracy? Such questions emerge from this research study and perhaps provide the basis for future research in this area.



# **The Role of the Chair of a School Governing Body**

## **Appendices**

- |            |  |
|------------|--|
| Appendix 1 | Sample of questionnaire sent to Chairs of governors  |
| Appendix 2 | Sample of interview schedule sent to Chairs prior to interview   |
| Appendix 3 | Examples of transcribed interviews <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Interview 3 Chair of Middle School in Newshire</li><li>- Interview 4 Chair of High School in Northshire</li><li>- Interview 5 Chair of Special School in Southshire</li><li>-</li></ul> |
| Appendix 4 | Examples of Diary entries <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Diary 1 Chair of Aided Comprehensive school in Southshire</li><li>- Diary 2 Chair of High School in Northshire</li><li>- Diary 3 Chair of Primary School in Southshire</li><li>-</li></ul>       |
| Appendix 5 | Observation schedule and commentary of a meeting of the Governing Body of St. Simon's C. of E. Aided Primary School, Southshire.   |



## **Appendix 1**

**A sample of the questionnaire used in the survey of Chairs of governors. This example is from a Chair in Newshire.**

**The letter introducing the questionnaire was part of the questionnaire which was produced in a booklet form.**

The logo for GoverNorth, featuring the word 'GoverNorth' in a stylized, bold, black font. The 'G' is large and has a thick, blocky appearance. The 'o' is a simple circle. The 'v' is a simple V-shape. The 'e' is a simple oval. The 'r' is a simple vertical line with a small hook. The 'N' is a simple vertical line with a small hook. The 'o' is a simple circle. The 'r' is a simple vertical line with a small hook. The 't' is a simple vertical line with a small hook. The 'h' is a simple vertical line with a small hook.

Dear Chair of Governors,

## **The Role of the Chair of a Governing Body**

Attached to this letter is a questionnaire related to your role as Chair of a school Governors Body. The purpose of the questionnaire is to assist in the understanding of the role of the Chair of a Governing Body. This is part of a small research project by the University of Newcastle and has the support of GoverNorth, the regional officer/governors forum for the North East of England.

I would be grateful if you would give approximately 15 minutes of your time to complete this questionnaire to assist in this research. The questionnaire has been sent to Chairs of Governing Bodies in a number of LEAs' in the North East. I am conscious of the pressure on your time as an individual volunteering your time to fulfil your governors duties, but this questionnaire is directly related to your role and this research is the first of its kind to be conducted on the role of a Chair of a Governing Body.

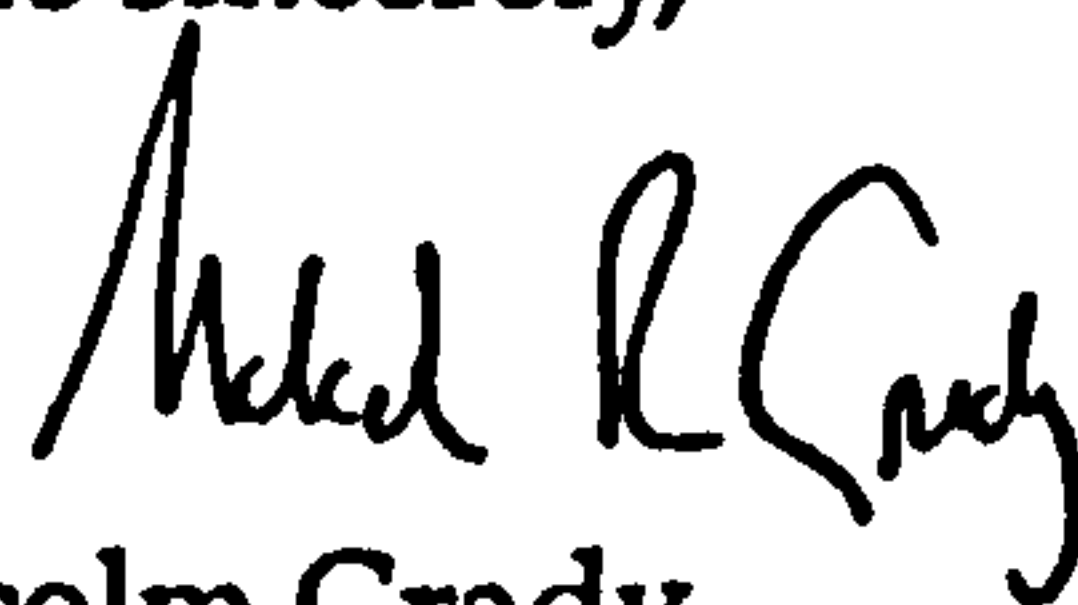
I appreciate that some of the questions relate to your role with the Head Teacher. These questions are included in order to match the views of Chairs of Governors with research already done on the views of Head Teachers in relation to Governing Bodies.

Therefore, your assistance is vitally important in this research. All questionnaires are confidential and no individual will be identified. No school names can be identified in the questionnaire.

The questionnaire has been distributed with the permission of your LEA and a return envelope has been enclosed for ease of return. As you will appreciate, the greater the number of questionnaires returned, the more valid will be any conclusions drawn from the responses. It is intended that each LEA involved in this research project will receive feedback at the conclusion of the research which will hopefully inform LEAs' of any future training needs of Chairs of Governing Bodies.

I would like to take this opportunity of thanking you in anticipation for your assistance.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Malcolm Grady'.

Malcolm Grady  
Chair, GoverNorth

NB Please note that the term 'Chair' has been used as the standard term. It is acknowledged that different schools and LEA's use different forms of address.



# The Role of the Chair of a Governing Body

Please tick the appropriate response in the space provided

Some questions allow for a brief written response to be made.  
A comment on these questions will be of great assistance.

## A Context

1. At which type of school are you a governor?

Infant

JMI

Junior

Middle

Secondary

High

Special

☐

☐

☐

☐

☐

☒

☐
2. At which category of school are you a governor?

County

Controlled

Aided

GM

☐

☒

☐

☐
3. Which category of governor do you belong?

Parent

Teacher

Co-opted

LEA

Foundation

☐

☐

☐

☒

☐
4. How many number of years have you been a Governor?
5. How many years have you been a Chair of Governors?

## B Time commitment

6. In the past academic year how many meetings of the full governing body have been held? (approximate)

7. Which of the listed Sub-Committees has your Governing Body established and on which do you act as Chair?

Sub-Committee	Chair
Finance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Staffing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Pay Policy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Premises	<input type="checkbox"/>
Discipline	<input type="checkbox"/>
Appeals	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other.....	<input type="checkbox"/>

8. Approximately, how many hours per week do you spend on Governing Body business?

Less than 5 hours	<input type="checkbox"/>
5 - 8 hours	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
8 - 12 hours	<input type="checkbox"/>
12 - 15 hours	<input type="checkbox"/>
more	<input type="checkbox"/>

8a. The following categories identify some of the different aspects of work of a Chair of a Governing Body. Please identify, in priority order using 1 - most, 7 - least, how you spend your time.

Attending meetings of the Governing Body	<input type="text" value="2"/>
Attending meetings with Head Teacher	<input type="text" value="1"/>
Dealing with parents	<input type="text" value="6"/>
Dealing with left over business from Governing Body meetings	<input type="text" value="5"/>
Liaising with LEA	<input type="text" value="4"/>
Writing reports	<input type="text" value="7"/>
Planning future steps to take	<input type="text" value="3"/>
Other .....	<input type="text"/>

C Chair - Head Teacher Relationships

9. How often would you meet with the Head Teacher?

When necessary	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
once a week	<input type="checkbox"/>
once a fortnight	<input type="checkbox"/>
other (please state)	<input type="text"/>



10. How would you normally communicate with the Head Teacher?  
(If more than one, please tick in priority order 1. - most/4. - least)

Telephone	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Letter	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Drop in and see Head	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
See Head by appointment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

11a. Relationships In your experience, which of the following issues may cause tension between a Chair and the Head Teacher?

Lack of information from Head	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Lack of availability of Head	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lack of time to discuss matters	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Lack of clear focus on future targets	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

11b. Policies In your experience, which of the following issues may cause tension between the Chair and the Head Teacher?

Admissions Policy	<input type="checkbox"/>
Budget Plans	<input type="checkbox"/>
Consideration of Grant Maintained Status	<input type="checkbox"/>
Staffing Appointments	<input type="checkbox"/>
Staffing reductions	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pay Policy	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other.....	<input type="checkbox"/>

12. Please give an example, in a few words, of such tension.

*There is a gray area between Chairs and Heads revolving around the issue of what is the Head's responsibilities and what are those of the Governing Body. It is, for instance, difficult to progress the Raising Standards Issue without having detailed data e.g. Departmental Strategies, detailed YELIS notes - the Head is reluctant to provide*

*(Please continue on other side if necessary) such details and this makes strategic planning on this issue difficult*

13. How would you describe your relationship with your Head Teacher?

Difficult	<input type="checkbox"/>
Generally sound, but areas still to be worked out	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sound	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Amicable	<input type="checkbox"/>
Very positive	<input type="checkbox"/>

14. Which of the following would best describe your working relationship with the Head Teacher?

Mutual supporters on an equal footing ☐

Head acts as professional adviser ☐

Strategic decisions by Chair/Governors, management decisions by Head ☒

15. Have any of these statements ever applied to you?

I have sometimes felt overwhelmed by the Head ☐

I have sometimes been influenced against my better judgement ☒

I have sometimes lacked a clear purpose in my relationship with Head ☐

None of the above statements ☐

16. Has there ever been an occasion where you have felt that you have 'stepped over the mark' in your working relationship with the Head Teacher?

No ☐

Yes ☒

If 'Yes', can you please give brief details.

Prepping the Raising Standards Issue. The  
Head's paper on this issue was seen to be  
inadequate but governors views were rejected.

17. Has there ever been an occasion where you have felt the Head Teacher has 'stepped over the mark' in your working relationship?

No ☐

Yes ☒

If 'Yes', can you please give brief details.

Not responding sensibly to complaints of a serious  
nature made by parents. All works out well in  
the end but the school always seems to behave  
it behaved impeccably.



**D Chair - Governor Relationship**

18. How would you describe the present state of your Governing Body?  
Please tick as many boxes that appropriately describe your present view.

- |  |                                     |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| a) Efficiently conducts its business or  | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| Some areas of efficiency of business need to be looked at                              | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| b) All Governors are fully aware of all Governor business or                           | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| Some Governors are more aware than others of all Governors business                    | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| c) The Governing Body acts as a team in all matters or                                 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| There are some divisions within the Governing Body but not so as to create disharmony. | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| d) All Governors make an equal contribution or   | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| Some Governors are much more active than others  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

19. What steps do you take to encourage participation by Governors

- |  |                                     |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| - Membership of Sub-Committee                      | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| - Individual responsibilities allocated            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| - Governor links to different parts of school      | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| - Encourage discussion at Governor's meetings      | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| - Allow governors to find a level of participation | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

20. How would you describe your relationship with the rest of the Governing Body

- |   |                                     |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| Harmonious - no problems at all             | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| Generally good, but occasional difficulties | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Satisfying on the whole                     | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| Could be better                             | <input type="checkbox"/>            |

21. Which of the following issues have caused you problems with the Governors in your role as Chair? Give brief example if box is ticked.

- |   |                                     |   |
|---|-------------------------------------|---|
| Conduct of the meeting                    | <input type="checkbox"/>            | _____   |
| Nature of some business item              | <input type="checkbox"/>            | _____   |
| Timing of the meeting                     | <input type="checkbox"/>            | _____   |
| Lack of information on a particular item  | <input type="checkbox"/>            | _____   |
| Exclusion of a particular item            | <input type="checkbox"/>            | _____   |
| Lack of part to play in a decisions taken | <input type="checkbox"/>            | _____   |
| Other .....                               | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <i>Intermittent attendance at critical meetings makes it difficult to keep all governors up to speed.</i> |

E. Chair - Governing Body Effectiveness

22. Do you believe that your Governing Body is
- a) Effective in carrying out all its duties or

b) More effective in some areas than in others
- ☐

☒

23. If b) What areas do you believe the Governing Body operates effectively in?
- Notes and Resources

Community (Adult) Education

24. If b) What areas of work of the Governing Body need improving?
- Curriculum Issues, notably Raising Standards

25. What is in place within your Governing Body to measure its effectiveness?
- Agreed targets for progress

A regular review schedule of the schools progress

An annual self review

An external review

Examining minutes of governors meetings

Other
- ☒

☒

☐

☒

☒

☐

26. What priority would you put on the regular training of school governors?
- A top priority in order to work effectively

Important but subject to funds and time

Only when money and time permits

Only when a governor asks for it

Not a priority
- ☐

☐

☒

☐

☐

27. Can you briefly list the training which your Governing Body has received since April 1997?
- Equal opportunities, notably racial awareness



**F. Information**

28. To whom do you look to meet your information needs?

(Please put in priority order 1-6)

Head Teacher	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Other Chair	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other Governors	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
LEA Officers	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
DFEE Officers	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other.....	<input type="checkbox"/>

29. Do you feel that there is:

sufficient information for you to carry out your role	<input type="checkbox"/>
insufficient information	<input type="checkbox"/>
information of the inappropriate kind	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

30. What information do you feel is lacking to assist you in your role if you feel it is presently insufficient or inappropriate?

The relationship between Heads and the LEA is  
too cosy and this results in governors being  
marginalised as they are frequently presented with fait accomplis.

31. Is the report of your Head Teacher:

tabled at the meeting?	<input type="checkbox"/>
sent prior to the meeting?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

32. Do you feel that the Head Teacher's report is:

sometimes lacking in detail?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
is right for your needs?	<input type="checkbox"/>
is too detailed to grasp?	<input type="checkbox"/>

33. Have you ever had occasion to give direction to the Head Teacher as to what to include in the Head Teacher report?

Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>

If 'yes', in what areas?

Several areas depending on the importance of issues  
eg. Site issues, Raising Standards

G Working Practices

34. Who constructs the agenda for Governors' meetings?

- Chair ☐
- Chair and Head ☒
- Head Teacher ☐
- Governors' Clerk ☐
- Chair and Clerk ☐

35. Do you time limit meetings? ☒  
allow meetings to come to a natural conclusion? ☐

36. Do you conduct business in a formal manner? ☐  
in a relaxed way? ☒

37. Do you allow each agenda item all the time it needs? ☒  
apply the 'guillotine' after a period of time? ☐

38. Do you stick rigidly to the agenda? ☐  
allow non-agenda items to be debated? ☒

39. Do you direct? ☐  
facilitate? ☒

H Pressures - Changes

40. How has the role of Chair changed in recent years in relation to each of the following. (please make a brief comment on each)

Workload

It is not possible to cope with the workload  
if one is in fulltime employment

Time spent

Intermittant pressure: may vary from a couple  
of hours a week to up to 10-15 when appointments  
need to be made.

Pressures



### With Governors

It can be difficult to get a whole governor  
view as some governors are reluctant to challenge  
the Head

### With Head Teacher

The Head likes to get his way. This causes  
trouble if one is not happy with the direction and  
this feeds into elements of turbulence with some governors.

### With LEA

The LEA frequently forgets about the Governing  
Body; we are also patronised.

### With DFEE

It is time-consuming coping with DFEE directives.

41. How do you feel about the changes?

Indifferent?

☐

Reluctantly accepted?

☐

Slightly overwhelmed?

☒

Other?

☐

42. What would you like to see happen to make your role as Chair more effective?

Better quality information

43. What have been the positive aspects of your role as Chair over the last few years?

It is a privilege being drawn into contact with

Senior Teachers and a pleasure to see the

school's performance improving. Some of the students  
are outstanding and a joy to meet.

**I    Additional Information**

**Please fill in this additional information in order to assist in providing a social context for the findings on this questionnaire.**

Gender

Male ☒

Female ☐

Age

18-30 ☐

31-40 ☐

41-50 ☐

51-60 ☒

61-70 ☐

Ethnicity

White ☒

Black African ☐

Black Caribbean ☐

Black Other ☐

Chinese ☐

Indian ☐

Pakistani ☐

Other ☐

Present role in life

Child supporter at home ☐

In work ☒

Not in work ☐

Retired ☐

If ticked, occupation University  
Teacher

Thank you for your co-operation in completing this questionnaire.  
Your contribution has been valued.

Please return this questionnaire in the envelope provided to  
Senior Assistant Education Officer,  
Education Department,  
Town Hall & Civic Offices,  
Westoe Road,  
South Shields,  
Tyne and Wear  
NE33 2RL



## **Appendix 2**

**This is an example of the interview schedule which was sent to Chairs prior to the interview**

## **The role of the Chair of governors**

**Name**

**School**

**Number of years as governor**

**Number of years as Chair**



## **Semi structured interview**

### **The role of the Chair of governors**

#### **A Becoming Chair**

1. Why did you want to become Chair?
  - previous chair
  - personal contribution
  
- 2 How would you describe the state of the governing body on becoming Chair?
  - personnel
  - functions

#### **B. Relationships**

3. Can you describe your relationship with the Head Teacher in terms of
  - time commitment
  - working relationships
  - communications
  
4. What are the strong points/advantages in your present relationship with the Head Teacher?

5. What are the weak points/disadvantages?

6. Have there been/ are there any tension points in governing body meetings?

7. How do you handle difficult situations? Can you give an example?

8. What is the most difficult decision that you have had to make in your role as Chair?

9. Can you describe your relationship with other governors?

- parent governors?
- teacher governors?

### **C. Perception of role**

10. How do you perceive the role of Chair in relation to the governing body?

- Chair of Board of Directors?
- Executive Director?
- Lay facilitator?



11.How do you determine whether your view of chairmanship is shared by the governing body?

12.How do you determine whether your view of chairmanship is similar/different to other Chairs' views?

13.What steps have you taken to develop your role as Chair?

#### **D. Changing role**

14. In what ways do you think the role of Chair has changed in recent years?

15.Do you feel that the changes have been for good or ill?

16.Where do you feel the impetus has come from for the changes that have occurred?

17.Are there any changes that you would like to see in the role of Chair?

### **E. Personal role as Chair within your school**

18. How do you plan for a governors' meeting?

19. Do you have a view as to what you want to achieve by the end of a meeting?

20. How do you feel prior to a meeting of the full governing body?

21. Can you describe feelings that you have at the end of a meeting?

22. Have you set yourself personal targets to achieve whilst in your term of office?

23. How do you measure success or failure in your role as Chair?



### **Appendix 3**

**These are three examples of the transcripts of interviews.**

- Chair 3 is Chair of a Middle School in Newshire**
- Chair 4 is Chair of a High School in Northshire**
- Chair 5 is Chair of a Special School in Southshire**

1. Why do I want to become Chairman?

Well, probably was a prompt from the previous Chairman although I had been the Vice-Chair for a couple of years and most of the ideas that were coming into the running of the meeting, probably from GoverNorth people and other Chairs of Governors, as to types of Committees, formation of meetings, we had a school diary as well. A lot of the prompts, as I say, were coming from elsewhere so it was probably a natural step apart from the fact that I am the oldest, longest-serving Governor and the oldest Governor.

*Can I just ask, was that a conscious factor, did people respect your experience?*

No, I think that since being retired I obviously have far more time than the two years when I had been Vice-Chair, the Chair who was at Newcastle University had been spending a lot of time away so effectively I was acting as Chair most of the time anyway. I had been on that body eight years at that time.

2. The state of the Governing Body

Well, it was actually the start of a new sort of four year cycle. We had three new Parent Governors, one of whom had been a Governor before the other two. We also had two or three fairly recent Local Authority appointments and a co-optee so it was a fairly inexperienced body on one side but on the other side we had Governors with a lot of experience as Governors and in business and basically they were in the right positions to do their jobs. The Chair of Buildings was an engineer for instance, the Chair of the Staffing Committee was a banker who had spent quite a large amount of time on personnel business. One of the Parent Governors works in Newcastle in the Public Works Department and is on the finance side there so we had some Governors who have a lot of experience, others who were fairly green so we had quite a mix at that time. As far as functions were concerned, we had the normal committees running; Finance, Staffing, Curriculum, Premises and what we called Welfare which is for the naughty boys. We have still got all of them running. For a while we had Premises and Finance running together because they are getting a big pyramid made right in the middle of this building - we're covering it in. So that really was the state of the Governing Body when we started.

3. We had a new Head four years ago, an American who was only the second Head we have had in the High School. I see him basically every week, sometimes for two minutes, sometimes for half an hour, whatever is going on, he brings me up to date at that time but we do see each other very regularly. I think overall we have a good working relationship. We have had problems regarding finance with being a Local Authority - but who hasn't? - and we have worked together quite well in meetings with the Director of Education, the Chair of Education etc. Communication between the two of us if anything urgent crops up, well, he's on the



telephone or the clerk to the Governors - we have our own clerk at the school who is actually his secretary as well, she is on the phone so we are always in fairly close contact with each other, in fact I only live 600/700 yards from the school. The fact that it is only a couple of minutes to get there if there is a problem but we do spend a fair amount of time talking to each other. I think overall I am fairly au fait with what is going on.

4. Probably some of it has been answered in 3. We get on alright together, we have disagreed as it were at times but never strongly. We're both going along the same road for the school so we have pretty good working relationship. He is a man who has lots of wheezes as he calls them and it is difficult at times keeping up to date.

*Not to dwell on the disagreement side but it would be useful to have an indication of airings because that is where we obviously hope to overcome problem areas.*

5. It is not a problem really, it is at times, say if he has lots of wheezes, he has brought well over two million pounds into the school in equipment etc. getting a big ? in there which has got 70-80 computers, we have got servers, we have got the whole lot, ? language college and there are times when somebody has to say to him well yes we are getting money for this, that and the other but we have got to provide some ourselves, and it is just a case of hold on whilst we have a look and make sure that we can afford it, in which case the LMS Officer we have ?, the teacher who has taken over at Boldon, a fairly strong character in her own way and will say, well now the money is not there and more often she can. Everything has been properly researched but it is just a case of hold on whilst as a Governor I make sure that the Governing Body get involved. So this is the only time when there has been say a disagreement which isn't strong at all. I don't think there are any weak points other than the possibility I suppose that if our finances etc. were fairly ? or any complaints the Head and the Chair of Governors, the Senior Management and the Chair of Governors and the Vice-Chair of Governors, they work very closely with staff so if ever you had to take or look at any sort of action regarding the workings of staff, it would be a disadvantage we do obviously, like every Governing Body, we have got our Disciplinary Redundancy Committees etc. etc. The Vice-Chair, who I have worked with for a lot of years, and I would share one other of the Committees. The Vice-Chairman actually Chairs the Redundancy Committee because he is Chair of Staffing ? logical. It is a weakness perhaps that we know them so well but I think that is also a strong point that you can get on with each other and you trust each other.

#### 6. Tension points in governing body meetings

The only tension points basically have been regarding one particular Governor who is, well he has three years' experience now, and is still fairly inexperienced and at times will not accept the factors given to him and this really goes on to question 7 as well. He has gone on a little when things have been explained to him two or three times and eventually having let him have a few words himself we just close that

point in the discussion. Every other Governor has accepted what they have been told in black and white and I think it is a difficulty to understand in comprehension terms. They are only times really we have had any tension points or any difficult situations in meetings regarding Governors.

*As a Chair, how would you try to resolve this?*

7. Basically, just by letting him..., we have explained things to him, he has got..., it has usually been on finance when we had problems 12 months ago and explaining to him that yes we can do this, we had a large deficit, some in one year, some in the next year, trying to explain to him and he had three, well I wouldn't say finance experts, but people with financial backgrounds explaining to him that everything was alright, we knew what we were doing, everything as stated was correct, no problems, we tried to get it through I suppose like a scientist trying to explain to me how to split the ? - I wouldn't understand, but it was a case normally of letting him have a few words to get a little bit off his chest then closing that point when we think we've moved on. Overall he is a very supportive Governor, he has done a lot of work for the school, he has gone off on his own once or twice and wrongly probably, started ferreting away through the party and it does no harm so overall difficult situations - only one or two.

8. The Most Difficult Decision

I don't think there has been a most difficult decision. It would have been going back to an earlier question had I been Chair of the Redundancy Committee, we were looking at redundancies two years ago on Governing Bodies. No difficult decisions basically other than appointment of senior staff, four years ago we appointed a Head which was a difficult decision. We had three lots of interviews looking to appoint Deputy Heads or assistant deputies when I had been Chair and we have had difficult decisions to make there moreso, I think than the deputy and assistant deputy because people involved are always somebody you know yourself and saying no you haven't got a job or you are staying in your present job and not getting promoted is not an easy thing to do but if you are Chair of something then the decision has to be made.

9. Relationships with other Governors

I don't, as far as relationships with individuals are concern, find any difference which road they come from, I was a Parent Governor, overall the relationships are good, probably and purely because of circumstances, I know the Parent and the Teacher Governors and the Co-opted Governors better than some of the LEA Governors and that, I think, is something that has probably cropped up in every interview that you don't see all of the LEA Governors that often. One of the Parent Governors and I worked fairly closely together now - it must be ten years - we were setting up a new integrated Humanities course in school and we have been involved all the way through with the staff in setting it up doing visits etc. looking back and keeping an eye on things, one of the Co-opted Members who I have worked with for a long time, one of the Teacher Governors who has been on it quite a long time, again I have



known him 20 years, overall the relationships are good. We are in a situation where at times we can agree to differ we don't always believe the same things but we do always believe in what is for the good of the school, the right way to go ahead and initially if your feelings differ from somebody else's we listen to what everybody's got to say and get on with it.

#### 10. The Chair

Well, I disagree from a lot of Heads that I didn't think the school was? and the Chair and the Governors actually are the Board of Directors to some extent with the Head Teacher as the managing director of the school. The Chair has to be the one to, if there is any disagreement, to try and get it sorted out as the Chairman of any organisation would do. The Chair is ultimately responsible for the spending of the money and the Chair at times can make a decision by himself without anybody else there if it is very very urgent, but I think really the Chair is the person who is sitting on that Body and just by the will of everybody else is that one that is making that decision overall, he is no different from any other Governor in having hopefully, a love for the school in which to do the best for them. He is the one who has come to the top and the man who is trying to control? Probably most of the Governing Body, I think, are the same as the Parent Governors being involved in? for a long time. I have often suggested to her that she becomes Chairman of the Welfare Committee because she would be... they have got two ladies, this one, her daughter has just left school so she now, Co-opted rather than Parent Governor, the other one is also Co-opted so in a year or two will also be a Parent. It would be ideal for? this older lady is more than happy to be a member of? and? damned hard, but she doesn't want to be a Chair. She is the ideal person to be on the Governing Body. She thinks a Chair has things to do which she doesn't feel she can do and she is more than happy that somebody else does it. I think overall in the Governing Body we all do feel the same way. Changes that have been brought in regarding meetings and scheduling of meetings etc. have been agreed by everybody. For instance, as far as meetings go, any Committee meetings are held on the second or third Monday of a month. It is the same Monday night in each month if there is a Committee meeting that is when it will be necessarily. Quite often we have two on one night. If we want two that month then why not have two the same night then it's over and done with for everybody which is something which I brought in three or four years ago for saving time. We have a little diary which we publish every year with the dates of the meetings in, various events in school, who is on what Committee etc. Again, it was an idea I brought in which I picked up from someone in? it could have been Linda Castle, it is a good idea you have got a diary you know in advance that you are going to have a meeting that night. If we change things we tell people but otherwise that is when it is set and it means you can plan ahead and we have... well three of us are Governors at the same middle school now and we have other Governors who are Governors elsewhere so it helps you to plan the year's events in your school and in other schools. As I say, I think everybody has been in agreement with this and they are all in agreement with the Monday evenings and that will change to whatever is the most suitable. We have the normal full Governors' meeting, we now have two a term which is

necessary but again everybody was quite happy to do that to have two which would last less than two hours rather than one which would go on for three or four hours.

11. Steps Taken to Develop the Role

Again, I think that probably comes within the way we run the Committee structure we have. I am still Chair of Finance, also Chair of Welfare because basically the only time Welfare ever meets is when they have had to have a permanent exclusion and that is the first ever time I met all those years ago I was sort of told I was Chairman of the meeting and followed on from there.

12. Changing Role

Well, the role of Chair and the role of the Governor has changed beyond belief in the last few years. When I started 25 years it was three meetings a year when we read the papers, went along, said a few words and everything was all done and dusted. Seven/eight years ago we had LMS delegated on a trial basis initially. The role of Chair and the role of all the Governors changed and I think the role of Chair now is, this is going back to question 10, is more the Chairman and more the Director because I think to do the job properly you have to have very much a hands-on approach, not an interfering approach but you have got to know what is going on in school, when it is going on, how it is going on, you have got to be there or available and I think this is where a good relationship would spring up if the Chair is there but not interfering but there is and when necessary rather than going in interfering - I've just popped in, I've got two hours to spare, I don't think that is the way to do it. The Chairman's role now is much more that of yes a Chairman of a Board or something like that but a very active Chair. Whether it had of been for good or ill I think it'll have been for ill if you've got a Chairman who is going to be too much of a busybody because after all, the majority of Governors are not education people. In many ways I don't think that is a bad thing but as long as the Chair realises that he or she, in most cases, doesn't have the in-depth knowledge of education but by the same token the Chair can have a very very good knowledge of the running of the business as far as the use of the resources, the cost of the resources and how best to deploy them, one thing which has been over the years a bone of contention to some extent with the Vice-Chair and myself having both worked in a bank. Over the years, suggestion schemes and good suggestions which people perhaps have thought of and never put on paper have finally been put into practice. In teaching there seems to be a lack of willingness at times to put somebody's good ideas into practice in another department and I think that an outsider can sometimes see and try and get people to go along with the idea that because they have done something for 25 years it is not necessarily the best way. Try another way, if it works for somebody else - it doesn't always but I think this is where the Chair as an outsider can be a good influence, a broad influence would be coming in and saying you do this and you do that or I have no knowledge of education but that works in a brewery or in a bank so it will work here - well it won't. The Chair has got to think of what he is suggesting and trying for himself or herself on both sides of the fence.

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13. Where do you feel the impetus has come from?

Well mainly from legislation. There has been far too much legislation in the last 10/15 years whereas some of it has been bad, some has been good or whatever. We have never had the chance and teachers have never had the chance to try something through to the end and get the best out of it rather than after one year that doesn't work very well - scrap it and start again. We did in the bank many years ago, try a pilot scheme for about six months, decided it didn't work and scrapped it - now it's in every bank. You go in a bank now and there are as many staff on your side of the counter as there is on the other. In 1981/2 something like that we tried it where I was having been allowed into public space but it doesn't work spending half their time doing nothing but I think it has come now and I think if the Government should let teachers and if teachers unions were given some of the ideas if they're cracking the whip there wouldn't have been so many changes but that certainly is where the impetus has come from but far too many changes in too short a time.

14. Any changes I would like to see in the role of Chair?

I think that whilst some Chairs are aware of where they can get information from the DfEE etc. I didn't think that Local Authorities, DfEE and all the various bodies make sure that the Chairman gets as much information - I know it's more and more paperwork but I think at times that we aren't as readily and quickly informed as we should be. Yes the Head is running the school and is responsible for day-to-day etc. and have Governors about them they will always rely on his or her experience or expertise but I think the Chair has a right to the same sort of information as far as possible regarding the business of running the school so I think that would answer that one.

15. Personal role as Chairman within the school - How to plan a Governors' meeting

Well basically, I do the agenda with the Head and with the Clerk to the Governors. We have roughly two agendas saying as we have two agendas a year, one agenda is more for receipt of reports, visitors reports and all the Committees etc. with any urgent business and the other one is more for major discussion topics, school development plan etc. which is going to take longer and, therefore, we have two slightly different kinds of meeting. This again is something we've done since we've had two meetings a year for a couple of years back and I'll put down a pro forma in fact we've got one on the computer now and we take it off and plan the meetings from there, adding whatever we think and make sure that the relevant paperwork goes out and make sure that whatever is on the - I've read the papers and have some idea of what is going on. Decide on the agenda who is actually going to speak on that particular topic if there is going to be any speaking, if no, the receipt of the report it's basically for information and questions.

16. The view is to achieve by the end of the meeting?

Well hopefully to resolve all the business on the agenda as far as can be. Do it with reasonable speed without scrimping through anything. As


I've just said, we try not to have a meeting that is going to last more than two hours for a full Governors. A committee meeting we look, hopefully, to be through in an 1½/1½ hours or less depending on what the agenda may be. But the hope is that every item on the agenda will be properly addressed and where you have to make a decision a decision will be made if you're looking for further information those whose job it is to get the information will go off and get it by the next meeting.

17. How did you feel prior to a meeting - nervous, relaxed?

I don't know really, anticipation perhaps is a feeling that you have. Not nervous I suppose unless there is anything which you know is going to cause a lot of argument perhaps a lot of disagreement but that very rarely happens. No, I mean, normally going into a meeting you are a little bit keyed up for it but not nervous, not relaxed in as much as laid back and quite happy to go into it. Feelings at the end of the meeting, yes you sometimes come out feeling well that wasn't very good we didn't get the answer that we wanted but not as much as the answer that I personally wanted but we did not get an answer, a proper answer to a question. I suppose 70/80% quite happy that we have got through a meeting, dealt with the business and dealt with it properly. Sometimes relief if something goes on too long and has been a thorny subject relief that you've got an answer to the problem, disappointment when it is a redundancy meeting or when you are talking about finance and you realise this happened or this would have happened a couple of years back that we would have to lose staff in the event that staff took early retirement and solve the problem that way. The trouble is in a meeting like that you know that whatever you do that the staff who are going to be left behind are going to have to do a lot more work so that any feelings there are always tempted by the fact that the people who are working within your school are going to have larger classes, less free time, more marking and have a harder workload for a particular year. It just so happens that year would be the year we have an inspection as well so we had a bad year last year.

18. Set yourself personal targets

I don't think I have any personal targets to achieve other than the plans that we have within the school development plan will come to fruition as far as our effects? Obviously a lot depends on outside influences, particularly finance in many cases but that whenever we set targets we give ourselves tasks that we get through to a satisfactory conclusion or a very good reason why we can't reach that. I suppose you could say to be? but not to do the job reasonably well or very well without causing unnecessary friction, and yes there will be disagreement and there will be times when Governors will come up to you and say I don't altogether agree with that but as long as the decision has been made by the body and a proper decision on the information whenever everyone has had a chance to say their piece, to get on with it, I think this is the sort of thing we have got to be satisfied with. The Governing Body is working as a body, they are working as individuals but with responsibility to the whole and you are getting through and giving the school and more important, the children, they are the ones coming in, the best possible chance to achieve their potential. This is





regards the league tables, yes it must be very very nice to be at the top of everything but I think the answer is if you've got children coming into high school whose best possible is 2 GCSE's at 'E' and they get 2 'D's the school have done very well and I think that is the achievement the added value as you say, if you can ensure that every child gets every effort every chance to achieve their potential I think everybody will be more than satisfied and I think basically that goes to 23 if you're a good Chair you have a good Governing Body and you have hopefully a good school, the morale will be fairly good throughout the school and children will, therefore, get a better chance of doing their best and reaching whatever they are going to reach or whatever they have got the capability to reach.

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## Question 1

## Answer

There was a vacancy, that's the main factor. The Chair who had been Chair for three years was retiring. I had been Vice-Chair for three years throughout her term of office. There was no-one else who was willing to do it and I agreed to be Chair really just for one year as a transitional period, so it was only ever intended that I should be Chair for one year. I also felt that in that year I could have some impact.

## Question 2

## Answer

We'd just had an OFSTED inspection that was very complimentary about the Governing Body. It was reasonably well organised, there were no personality clashes, the committees were well staffed, attendance was good. I'm not so sure that I would have described it as a very effective Body. It was there and it did things but I'm not so sure it actually influenced things and changed things. I don't think it had the capacity really to act independently. It worked smoothly because it was well oiled and people attended and people were well meaning but I think the Head Teacher controlled it too much for it to be truly effective.

Gite

## Question 3

## Answer

He makes very few, I would say virtually no demands on my time at all and I came into the post really actually saying that I wasn't going to be able to give the Chairmanship as much time as the previous Chair. The previous Chair was someone who, through her job, was able to pop into the school more often and actually did pop in a lot, probably on a weekly basis and I (a) didn't feel I wanted to do that and (b) didn't feel that I could do that. I actually thought it was intrusive to pop in with that degree of regularity, so what I tried to establish with the Head Teacher was prearranged fortnightly meetings which he always agreed to but he never proposed. All our meetings always, with one exception at my instigation, certainly made me feel that I was doing the pushing all the time. I think my relationship with him was friendly but superficial, he was very guarded and has always been very guarded with me. He wasn't very prepared when I turned up for our meetings even though I would turn up with specific things to discuss, a verbally agreed agenda and when he was prepared it actually was very closed. He presented me with a series of ??? and I suppose that would be his definition of a successful meeting but I came and saw things that were all closed and dealt with and that was it and moved on. I was uncomfortable with it but I mean I had an easy relationship with him. It wasn't difficult but I suspect that he was uncomfortable because I think he was nervous about managing my relationship like that. It's difficult to tell, we actually never discussed it. My impression was that he tolerated me and probably tolerated the Governors. To be fair to him he did actually say on a number of occasions that he actually valued individual Governors piece of work. For example we had a Governor who was specialist in personnel matters and came and drafted some job descriptions. I'm sure he was grateful for that and somebody

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was kind of a management consultant type of person and she came and did a little bit of work and organised things and he appeared to be grateful about that as well. I think only because it legitimised what he wanted to do in the first place.

**Question 4**

**Answer**

Well, we're friendly. It's a fairly open relationship. I think now that he has probably learnt to trust me a bit more so he'll confide in me about certain aspects, so there is a degree of trust. I think he knows my limitations so that's good because he does not expect too much of me and perhaps I know his limitations too although that isn't something we discuss very openly.

Qte

**Question 5**

**Answer**

Well I think it is what I was saying earlier, I don't think my role is very clear and his role in relation to me is that clear. I don't think it is an entirely honest relationship because I just feel that I have to get things from him all the time, that I'm doing the pushing and I get access only when he wants me to have access.

**Question 6**

**Answer**

There was intense pressure and tension just before I became Chair or maybe a couple of years before I became Chair on the Governing Body. They had fallen out very badly. There were factions of Governors that met outside formal meetings in people's houses and there was also tension between one faction and the Head Teacher and I was perhaps one of the new wave of Governors and the Chair. I was Vice-Chair and the new Chair who was designed to heal this rift and I imagined if and there were no significant tensions after that. Some people moved on and left, so there were no real tensions, the odd clash between two Governors I think, but that was more of a personally clash that anything significant. No significant tension.

**Question 7**

**Answer**

I don't know. I can't think of an example. Yes, I can't think of a real example. The most difficult situations I have dealt with have been disagreements with the Head Teacher over exclusions and disagreements with the Head over appointments but it is difficult to say which is the most significant of the two. In both cases I just expressed my views very forcefully and the most difficult decision was basically as a member of an interview panel when I clashed with the Head Teacher about who should be appointed from a shortlist of three. The cause of the tension was because we disagreed - I was interviewing with the Head Teacher and the Deputy Head Teacher at the time and I was a minority of one and I was not prepared to sanction the appointment of the person they wanted and I felt that what I had come up against was in-built institutionalisation. Basically the person they wanted to appoint had been the longer serving teacher in the school. They were all internal candidates for a promotion for a Head of Year post which

carried some extra points and the Head actually said that I can't possibly say to her she hasn't got the job, she has been here longer than the other two and I felt that, by far, the stronger candidate and the more able candidate was somebody who had only been in the school for two years and I felt that it was really going against the grain not to appoint in a kind of chronological sequence and it was very hard but as far as I was concerned we made the right appointment in the end. I did insist, so that was quite difficult because it wasn't against the Head's better judgement, his problem was about explaining the decision to the staff, to the candidate in the first place, and to the other staff whereas I didn't have any problem with that and did mean we were appointing the better candidate. That was perhaps the most difficult thing I have had to handle.

#### Question 9

##### Answer

Difficult. We have two Vice-Chairs now and I have got to say that I don't consult with them at all really. One of them is not very active at all and barely comes to meetings. The other one is very active but only in certain areas, he's just very interested in premises and things to do with Health and Safety and I tend not to work with them very closely. I think there is a lack of trust perhaps there. No problems but I don't trust his judgement very much, but no difficulties with the other Governors. The Teacher Governors, one of them tends to confuse his role I think as a bit of a union representative so he's often trotting out the union position at Governors meetings and raises issues that I'm often having to say to him this is a matter that you should be taking up through your union with the Head and not here with the Governing Body and I'm not sure that I'm right and honest in saying that I think there is a certain ambiguity about that, about the role of Teacher Governors. It's not difficult, we had one difficult thing when we had to change the working of the school day to accommodate the Literacy Hour, we just had to shift things around a bit, we actually extended the working day by five minutes but that was a real blocking point of the Governing Body, it took a long time to get over that item which I felt was a union issue and not one for the Governing Body but it worked alright and I basically had no option but to back the Head's decision, we sanctioned it, end of matter. I don't know whether this is to more basically encourage the Teacher Governors to take it up with their union if they have any problem.

#### Question 10

##### Answer

There are individuals on the Governing Body who do their own thing on behalf of the Governing Body. In a sense I co-ordinate what they do so for example there are Governors who are very interested in premises, others who are very interested in curriculum matters and get very heavily involved and very active and I take a kind of a denying them fairly distance interest in what they do so in that sense I'm not very directive, I don't manage what they do, I just facilitate. I certainly have a very dominant role in relation to the management of Governing Body meetings. I mean I'm the only



person who draws up the agenda, I will sit down with the Head and draw up the agenda and go through the notes of the previous meeting before they are circulated, so I'm very controlling about the conduct of meetings and I'm on two sub-committees and I suppose I tend to dominate those as well, with the Head I planned them and I think that the Governing Body relies on me for this bilateral relationship with the Head Teacher so anything that needs to be discussed with the Head Teacher it is always assumed that I will do it. Anything to do with the Head is me. I mean I haven't said that this is how I've inherited anything and carried on from there. It has not been a conscious set of arrangements, consciously planned.

Qute

**Question 11**

**Answer**

Probably. I think the Governing Body seem to be happy or seem to aqueous with the present arrangements. It appears to suit them. Roughly the Governing Body consists of people who don't come to very many meetings and if they do contribute not very significantly. People who will come to meetings aren't very active and then active Governors who tend to be very active in sub-committees and I think the arrangements seem to suit.

**Question 12**

**Answer**

Other Chairmans, I've never met any other Chairman. I have no contact at all with the Chair of other Governing Bodies. I don't think my predecessor as Chair, who was Chair for three years, had ever had any dealings with any and yet we are a very clear pyramid of schools. There are a number of primary schools that feed into three middle schools and all three middle schools feed into the same high school and the three Heads work very closely together and very often I will be talking to the Head about his relationship with the Heads of the other two middle schools and a lot of the things that we discuss really have a lot of bearing on the other schools but I have never met the Head Teacher. Funnily enough one of the Chairs is a friend of mine, he's a colleague as well, he's a Chair of a school but we never talk about it.

**Question 13**

**Answer**

The key thing there has been target setting for the Head Teacher because I'm the first Chair of Governors to implement targets. They were there before and to try to formalise other procedure for reviewing Head Teacher's pay and linking that to objectives so I think that it has been an important change in the role of the Governors. I think it's influenced my role and I have to drive that all the way. Certainly with the Head Teacher and even with some of the Governors so that has actually altered the relationship between the Chair and the Head Teacher in an interesting development. The LEA required us well before we actually started setting performance objectives for the Head Teacher but we hadn't done it, we had discussed it in the past and hadn't done it and we also discussed linking that to the review of the Head Teacher's pay and we had vaguely talked about setting objective criteria so that we didn't sit every September and review his pay on the

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basis of nothing but it had never happened before and it was sort of wise for the Chair that we did that for the very first time and it was quite a difficult process because it was very new and it was resisted by the Head Teacher initially and I also think the ??? was quite alien to some of the Governors.

Qute.

#### Question 14

##### Answer

Apart from my comments about target setting and sort of performance management role it's difficult for me to tell. I mean I don't have an overview and my view is too wrapped up with personalities. The previous Chair was very involved, very committed in the school a lot, talking to the Head a great deal, involved in very detailed discussions with the Head but I think she didn't stand far back enough in her role and I wasn't sure what her role was but I think that might be to do with her personality so it's difficult to tell I'm not in a position to answer question 14. I mean whether it was a personality or me or the role?

#### Question 15

##### Answer

If indeed the Chair will continue to be this person who is instrumental in holding the Head Teacher personally accountable then that's a very difficult change, I'm not so sure that it is wholly positive. I have reservations and my reservations stem from the fact that potentially it gives the Chair of the Governors an enormous amount of influence and power but how much time do Chairs have, how much training have they done? A lot of training is offered but I mean I have never been on any training courses at all, just haven't had the time and who are Chairs accountable to?

Qute

#### Question 16

##### Answer

You could actually find the situation of a terunacle Chair with perhaps a fairly weak Head Teacher who could be bullied by the Chair of Governors and the opportunities to be bullied exist so I'm not so sure that I am entirely comfortable with the relationship. The impetus for the changes - I think they appear to be driven by the LEA or by the Department for Education via the LEA.

#### Question 17

##### Answer

I don't know. I have reservations about the role of Governing Bodies altogether, whether they should exist at all. I think probably with hindsight I see no use for them at all and I would much rather schools were firmly managed by the LEA. I think as an exercise in democracy that they're a failure really. I mean I was a Parent Governor for four years, I don't think I represented any parents. Occasionally the odd parent would ring me up but it was usually parents who I was friendly with anyway which means our children were friends or because they were friends of mine so I don't think they are very successful in ensuring representation of parents' views or even the Local Authority appointed Governors I'm not so sure they represent political parties views. Co-opted Governors try to

Qute.



get sort of a business representative it's so random who you get so I really seriously doubt the role of Governing Bodies and I'm not so sure that they perform any useful function at all. I got something out of it because my children were at the school and I felt that I could keep an eye on the school and perhaps have some influence on what was going on but that's no justification for having a Governing Body just because somebody like me was there ??? because my children were at school.

**Question 18**

**Answer**

I go through the minutes of the previous meeting, I give a draft copy of the minutes so I go through those with the Head. A lot of the agenda we follow is the recommended agenda by the LEA plus a lot of agenda items of things that come up because we've deferred them very often because people are unprepared we kind of bring things to the meetings for mention but because people haven't read them we invariably say right we'll review this in six months time so a lot of the things on the agenda comes back because we have not been very good at dealing with it the first time round. I occasionally have a word with a Clerk from the Governors' Agency in planning the meeting and I may have a word with the School Adviser about specific agenda items. I basically ask him to lead us through the discussion on that but it is largely planned between me and the Head.

**Question 19**

**Answer**

Yes. Get through the business by 9.00 am - number one objective. I mean I have a view of the outcome of every agenda item on what I want to happen so whether it's because I want a policy to be ratified or for us to have a significant discussion, I tend to have objectives about each separate item.

**Question 20**

**Answer**

Fairly relaxed. I'm usually quite well prepared. The only thing I would worry about perhaps is whether we have got too much on the agenda and basically whether people will participate.

**Question 21**

**Answer**

Feelings at end of the meetings. Fine, no problems. They tend not to be difficult meetings at all. Sometimes there are differences of opinion between Governors but it's never difficult for me, I don't feel challenged as a Chair and can mediate quite comfortably, it's not difficult at all.

**Question 22**

**Answer**

I wouldn't go so far as to actually say that there were targets. I had some ideas about how I wanted to do what I did and that was to do in relation with, well there was a few things I wanted to do. One is my relationship with the Chair, I wanted that to change. I was wanting to influence the school's policy on exclusions.

**Question 23**

**Answer**

My view is that the Head Teacher will feel that he has managed me that I was a Chair who has been and gone so I don't think I've managed to have the kind of impact I thought I might have had. Having said that I've left the Governing Body in a healthy state, it's well attended, all the vacancies are filled, all the committees are staffed, I mean the business gets done so it functions but I'm not so sure it's particularly effective and what I think it may be there is no need for it to be any more effective than it is other than to meet, do its statutory business, present its annual report, have an AGM for parents, approve the budget, just basically do its statutory bids, rubber stamp and do the business without actually influencing too much of what goes on in the school.



OK why did I want to become Chairman. I don't think I actively wanted to become Chairman of the Board of Governors that we are talking about. I had been Vice-Chair for a while and I think being Vice-Chair was a consequence probably of the fact that other people on the Board felt that because I had experience of education, albeit in a different environment that this was useful for the Governing Body and I think perhaps they felt that I had some experience of chairing meetings in other situations that again they felt might be useful and ultimately the nomination was made and I accepted it but it wasn't something that I actively sought.

The state of the Governing Body on becoming Chairman. Well again I don't know how typical the Governing Body at this particular school is, having had only limited experience of Governing Bodies elsewhere but I would say that it is a very committed Governing Body. It always has been for as long as I've had any association with the school. It's never been one of these Governing Bodies where people would come to either just promote an individual point of view or where the commitment has been erratic depending on what's on the agenda and so on. The people on that Governing Body have always had a fairly constant and consistent level of commitment and they are interested in all aspects, I would say, of the organisation and running of the school and development of the school and so I would say the state of the Governing Body was that it was already a well organised, well committed, and I would say quite disciplined Governing Body in terms of the way business is handled and so there was never any kind of development for me to do, if you like in terms of structuring a team or focusing peoples minds or any of that. I expect people from the experience I had as Vice-Chair and before that I expect people to come along having read the previous minutes, having considered a point of view about the items which are on the agenda, prepared to discuss things, willing to give other people a hearing. I think we are a very civilised and very thoughtful Board, probably.

Just on that its a pretty small Governing Body.

Yes.

Some schools have extensive number of Governors on, up to 23. Do you think your perception of the Governing Body is linked to its size?

Well I wouldn't say that my perception is linked to its size. The way that it operates may be a consequence of its smallness, the kind of camaraderie that people have got, and I don't mean that in any sort of casual sense. They are a very focused Governing Body but I think that the smallness of the numbers perhaps offers less scope for people to be in groupings or camps or whatever, but I think there would still be potential for all of the kind of negative things that can happen in groups to be manifested but they just haven't been in that Governing Body.

Relationships with the Head Teacher. The relationships that we have got or the way in which we manage the relationship, if you like, is that, well she and I, I suppose, are similarly placed professionally, in that we are each responsible for body of work, a number of staff, and so on, so we have an understanding of each others point of view and professional commitments and obligations and so on. I think we have an insight into one anothers problems at work and the kind of strategy and techniques that we each might adopt.

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The way that we keep in contact is that I would have fairly regular telephone contact with the Head Teacher and she would always contact me if there was a situation in the school that she either needed to sound me out on or felt there was an advantage in sounding me out on. We try to have a meeting, a specific meeting once a month where she updates me on what's happening in the school and again if there was something that she wanted to explore with me in greater detail we would do it at that point and we try to have a pre Governing Body meeting meeting and that gives us an opportunity to review the minutes from the previous meeting in case there's anything that we want to raise as an issue from them or anything that we think might need to be amended. That's very rare because the clerking of the Governors there is very very good I would say. That's the strength in the Governing Body that I perhaps should have mentioned before. We like to discuss together the issues that are coming up and I think that that actually helps me in the position of Chair. I hope that it's helpful to the school and I hope that it's helpful to the other Governors and so on. Things aren't just arising out of the blue and even if there might be a difference in prospective, at least we've had a chance to consider what those differences might be and how they might be presented to the Governing Body when it meets. I think its a fairly effective working relationship. I hope that the Head Teacher feels supported and I draw a lot of support as well in my position from her because I know she keeps me well informed. I know things are not going to take me by surprise in the meetings and I know that if I have to do any kind of preamble to a discussion or anything like that I've got information that I can work from or I know where it's time to ask for information from other people there because we've considered that in advance. I don't feel kind of alone, or vulnerable, or in a corner or anything going into meetings.

Question 4 - The Strong Points and Advantages in the Relationship with the Head Teacher. I would emphasise some of the points which have been made already. The fact that we do have some things in common in our backgrounds I think is useful in assisting the relationship. I think that because of that shared background we expect one another to have points of view and if there are slight differences in those points of view, and I mean where there are differences they tend to be just of degree rather than, you know, we very rarely come from opposite sides in a discussion. I think the fact that we've got a shared background allows us to view those differences very honestly and sympathetically, one with another and to make an accommodation of those differences. So I would say that we are able to deal honestly with one another. I can't speak for the Head Teacher but I hope that she feels that I would respect her performance as a professional teacher and manager and I would hope that, well I get a sense that she respects my opinions as well, so I think its based on the fact that I would expect the Head Teacher to be doing a very good job which history tells us she is doing and she would expect me to make a contribution from my own experiences and sometimes to give her a slightly different direction on something because I've encountered a similar situation, or to reinforce her own proposals or suggestions about things, again generally based on my own experience of having encountered similar problems.

Coming out of your own specific situation, if you weren't a professional would that shared leaf do you think the Chair may be overwhelmed?



Well, personally I think there is a lot a lay person can offer on a Governing Body but I think a lay person would be very dependent on the integrity of the Head Teacher because I think you're very dependent on them for giving you pucker information about requirements, about approaches, about possibilities and I think it would be possible, I would say, for a Head Teacher to be over enthusiastic in the way they direct things and to over dominate things and to miss the potential to use the other kinds of expertise that might be represented in the Governing Body. You would hope that that wouldn't happen but you could imagine situations where it might happen, that people could become, if there is any kind of consultation about things, they might be mouth pieces for rather than supporters of or partners with a Head Teacher.

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I mean there are pure examples of ... its just really to get your views, or to whom your view matches in reality in some situations.

I would say that's unfortunate. It's a kind of abuse of power when people take advantage of somebody not having the background because they wouldn't be there for the background. They would be there for other things that they can offer and I think that the Head Teacher really ought to be using peoples generosity actually in terms of them giving their time and giving their support to the school and using that to good effect and not just using it as an excuse to be able to railroad everything through.

The weak points. Well I don't think there are weak points in terms of the relationship. I think my own work demands mean that I can't give as much time and support. The Head Teacher that I would be thinking of doesn't need day by day support but it might be nice to be able to be in the school more often. Flying the flag kind of thing and I don't have time to do a lot of that kind of thing and if I had to point to a weakness I would say that's where I feel my weakness is as a Chair of Governors that I can't just be in and out of the school frequently although I would try to be there for key occasions obviously.

Tension points in Governing Body meetings. Well as I say we are a fairly well disciplined group of people. I've mentioned already we are very, very well taken care of with the clerking arrangements and I think that's very important. When I've had to act as Chair when I was Vice-Chair, and now as Chair I think that a good relationship with the clerk can avoid a lot of problems because you can run through the agenda with the clerk in advance, the clerk can flag up for you the way in which you need to approach particular topics that are coming up, what kind of outcomes are required, whether it's sufficient to note something, whether a decision is required. I'm thinking particularly if we receive Director of Education reports and that kind of thing. I would be quite dependent on the information that I receive from the Head Teacher and the things we have talked about and the back up you can get from the clerk in terms of managing the meeting and keeping the meeting the structure of it and the formalities and so on right and I would use those two sources to prevent tensions as far as I can. Again we're fortunate in terms of the people we've got there because they are all people who are well motivated in terms of their work on the Governing Body. I don't think we've got anybody that is there because they want to be a Governor. Everybody that's there wants to be there to assist the school and so we don't have any difficulties that arise from people posturing or wanting to prolong a debate so they can take centre stage or anything like that and, therefore, I think the business of the

school is progressed fairly successfully or very successfully probably through the formal meetings. I sometimes have a sense that I don't maintain the formality perhaps as much as one or two members might prefer. People who are used to going to meetings have a perception of how a meeting ought to be conducted. Now in my working life here I would tend to conduct the business of meetings in a, not a casual way, but I don't like to stand on ceremony at meetings. I like a meeting to kind of be very open in terms of the discussions and I don't worry about people saying if I may say through the Chair and all this sort of thing, I try to dispense with all of that and I sometimes wonder if maybe a slightly more formal approach would suit better one or two people but they've never suggested that it's a problem to them. It's maybe just my sensitivity to things that makes me think that in the first place.

Qw

Difficult situations. There haven't been major points of disagreement that haven't been able to be resolved through just the normal course of discussion in the meetings that I've attended, either as Chair, Vice-Chair or a member of the Governing Body. The only difficulty, I think, that I've experienced is that sometimes you need to bring something to a conclusion. It's gone round in as wide a circle as it can fruitfully go round in and you've got to bring it to a halt. Now the thing that I do there that some people might find a bit disconcerting for somebody whose sitting in the Chair, and again its something that I do in meetings here at work, I take copious notes even when I'm chairing the meeting and then I try to use what I can glean from those notes as the way to draw out very specific bullet points to try to bring the discussion to an end. I'm quite happy for people to have a good hearing, I don't think there's an amount of time that I would give to a discussion but when I feel that it's gone back on to the same circuit again and it's going to develop and nothing new is going to be said, I tend to say to people well is that it, is there anything extra that people want to say and am I right to say we've got X,Y and Z propositions or we've got 1, 2 and 3 action points and I would try and draw it to a close at some point.

If there's two boxes and one said 'do you direct me on this' or 'do you facilitate me on this', which box might you take?

I would tend to opt but marginally I would say for facilitating. I would never ever cut somebody short who I felt had something productive to say, something helpful to say, or just something they felt needed to be said, even if it wasn't going to progress things necessarily. I think people in that situation need to feel confident to speak without being sort of, you know, we've passed that now let's move onto the next thing. I think you've got to bring people in and keep them in the discussion but I think if you're going to a meeting having no thought in mind about where the meeting will go, then I think you are really committing a disservice, because I think that's what the chair is about, that's what distinguishes the chair from every other person that might be in that room, the chair should go in with a concept of the possibilities of outcomes that the meeting might generate and if you don't I would say that you haven't prepared properly for the meeting and that isn't to say that you know which of the possibilities you're going to go for nor either there might be an option that you hadn't thought of that ultimately emerges as the right option or the best option but I think if you go with no concept of what the shape of the meeting might be like then you haven't really fulfilled some of the obligations of the chair.

Qw



Difficult decisions. I don't think that I've had to make a decision that is a difficult one. I think you like to bring people to a consensus about things and I think you might sometimes have to bring things to a conclusion without having persuaded fully, you know, one or two people there, but I don't think any decisions that we've been called on to make have been difficult ones.

There are difficult decisions where there is a moral issue or there is a difficult decision where there's practical issues such as the budget, reduced staffing, the difficulty there, it's a question of if the situation has arisen like that, how has your role as chair interacted with the Governing Body?

Right, well, we were discussing a request from a member of staff at the most recent meeting, actually, and it was a request where it might have been nice to be able to say 'yes' to that request, but we had to say 'not at this time' to that request. Now I think that's an unhappy decision in the sense that somebody is going to be disappointed by it, but I don't think it's difficult because in the interests of the school it was the right thing to do and for me a difficult decision would be one where you had to move away from it still not personally persuaded that it was the right one. I feel that if a decision is the right decision to make then you might take a while to get to it but I wouldn't regard making it as a difficult thing to do, but that might just be me. I think that the overriding principle has to be what is in the best interests of the school and with that principle so long as you feel that you can defend that position if you need to and that you've made the decision with equity then I think that's all that you can do.

My relationships with other Governors. Well, er (laughs) ...

If you feel that you've answered then just pass on.

I think I probably have, any rate, I feel that I get along well with the other Governors. I don't think that they feel overridden or overruled or duntrodden. They might sometimes think I let people talk too long, I think, but maybe I'm a bit of a softie really. I would rather people came away with that feeling and the one's who wanted to speak came away thinking, well I had a hearing than for them to think that I was like superly efficient always and left some people kind of sitting on the edges or feeling that they hadn't had their chance to say what they felt. I think you've got to have a lot of sympathy for people who aren't so familiar with being in formal meetings because they're difficult things to get used to sometimes and those of us who attend meetings regularly all know how excruciating it is to sit in a meeting wanting to say something but just not feeling confident to do it and I think you've got to recognise that if you felt like that at some time in your life then other people will possibly be feeling the same way. I hope that the others feel that I respect their opinion because there are things particularly that the Parent Governors can offer that nobody else can speak with the same kind of commitment that they can about things.

I think point 10 we've probably covered. Do you? The perception of the role of the Chairman in relation to the Governing Body and we've looked at a sort of director/facilitator and kind of aspect to it.

How do I determine whether my view of chairmanship is shared by the Governing Body? Well I think all that you do here is you get a vibe for how people are responding to the way that the meeting is chaired and I've made reference earlier to the fact that I sometimes have this little feeling that people wished, or some people might be more comfortable with a more overtly formal committee procedure but I wouldn't be comfortable with that much more formal arrangement and, therefore, if the general feeling was strongly for that I think they would just have to elect a different chairman.

At the end of the meeting do you ever go up and just have casual discussion say how do you feel that went ...

People will sometimes make those sorts of comments spontaneously and to the extent that anybody's ever said anything, they've said complimentary things about the way the meetings have been conducted but really a lot of that is down to them as much as me just because they are a very orderly group of people.

If I could just ask this question of you given you role and professional background you're conscious of the need to evaluate actions, events, progress in your role of chair do you ever think do I need the ... face to evaluate my faults or effectiveness as the Chairman.

Oh, I think every time I'm going into a meeting I would think how did things go last time or the time before and what do I need to be aware of and I think one of the things that I've learned is that the clerk can perform a role as well as the Head Teacher and I would say that's something that I've done more consciously recently than I would have done earlier because you realise what kinds of assistance you can get from different people, you know, as you go through a series of meetings and I think a good clerk is an invaluable asset to a Governing Body, any Governing Body I think would suffer if it were not well served by its clerk. In terms of the relationships with other people I think it's just a case of gauging who might want to, who might need to be drawn in, who is going to speak any way, and you can start to learn who to look at for different kinds of input to meetings and also to know in advance whether people have had conversations, obviously I don't mean confidential conversations, but conversations about issues that are coming up which might lead into an input from them. If you've got that awareness then you can manage the meeting better again just by very directly asking for a point of view from somebody or knowing that it's time to give them a space to come in and I think these kind of pre meeting meetings are useful in that respect, not because you want to engineer anything but because you need to know if people have a particular interest and if they might be a bit apprehensive about raising that point without some kind of lead into it.

Right, well number 12. My view of chairmanship and the view that other chairs might have. The only thing I could say about that is I attend so many meetings that I observe different ways of running them and there are very different ways to run them and I suppose really in a way I adopt what is essentially the house style that I'm used to in my own working life and that style suits me but I have seen other chairs do it.



Steps that I've taken to develop the role and, well things that I've already mentioned I think that the preparation stage is the thing that I've given more attention to so that I go in having already formed some points of view about all of the things that are going to be discussed and using the Head Teacher and the clerk to help with the management of the meeting. I would say that I've very consciously done those things.

How has the role of the Chairman changed? Well I think the role of the Chairman is the fairly constant thing but the sorts of issues that schools or Governing Bodies are called on to address these days has changed and, therefore, I think that the kinds of questions that might be raised and the nature of the discussions that take place require a slightly different approach. There are lots of things that Governing Bodies have to be interested in now that perhaps they didn't need so much to be interested in previously like rates of pay, positions on the salary scale and the justification for either maintaining or advancing those positions and things that at one time might have been thought to be strictly the domain of the school, target setting and so on I think Boards of Governors are going to have to be much more aware of, where the school stands in relation to national bench marks and that kind of thing. I think it's not possible any longer to just look at the work of the school in isolation without reference to other measures of success or failure and I think as well there are concerns that the Governors might have to address to be able to support staff in the things that they do, things like addressing drug abuse or drug education, in addressing child abuse and those sort of issues where you probably need to build up an area of knowledge or areas of knowledge that at one time you could have said just leave it to the people who know and let them worry about it sort of thing. I think if you're going to support the staff in the school through the work of the Governing Body the Governing Body has to be able to view policies and so on that are being developed intelligently to be able to help the staff to identify where a policy might be over digress where it might need to contain more than it does and to have a reason for having those thoughts. I think the body of knowledge that, not just a chairman but everybody on the Governing Body needs to have now is broader.

If as a Chair you thought the extensive range of duties and the role do you exercise any thoughts about the mountain of work which is ... and therefore the role of the chair is slightly being extended ..

We've got several sub-committees in this school anyway. There are several situations where you can feel quite confident about letting the school arrange its committees and working parties internally without necessarily having a representative from the Governing Body but I think its the duty of the Governors to be able to review the work of those internal committees where necessary and do justice to them. Not just to feel that you're going to look at something they've produced and because it's been produced you're going to let it pass without comment, but if you're going to make comment then it has to be well informed. It has to be based on something substantial and staff have to feel confident that the Governors have taken the trouble to know something about a subject before they would have the arrogance to suggest improvements if the comment is just based on nothing in particular then I think its almost an impertinence to come in and say, "look you should have done it like this" or, "you should have do it like that" but I feel that if staff feel confident that you have done a bit of homework about something then the comments would be better received.

Have the changes been for good or ill? I think the changes are inevitable because I think the whole context in which education now operates is different from how it has been in the past and I think broadly speaking, and I say this only from a personal perspective, not from anything else, I think if people are responsible for spending other peoples money which is what everything in the public sector is based on, then they ought to be accountable and they ought to regard that accountability as a good thing because people have to work very hard to provide the funding for the public sector and they deserve to get value for money back.

Where has the impetus come from? I would like to be able to think that all of the changes have been motivated only from a desire to improve the education system that children encounter. I don't think that's entirely true. I think what happens is that people have a financial imperative and that financial imperative might be about reducing costs or it might be about justifying better the expenditure which is made but I think the financial imperative is often the thing that drives change and I think that in Britain a lot of the motivation for change is being a determination to link school performance and economic performance or education performance and economic performance very closely together and I don't think that's always the best that can happen for schools, for children or for the nation either. I can remember saying to somebody years ago, well if there has to be such a close association with the state of the economy and what small children are doing why don't we just shove every little boy up a chimney again and let that be an end to it. I think children should be allowed to develop for their own sake and not have to have a vocational orientation in their early school years as seems to be desired now. I don't know whether that answers question 16 or not but I think that a lot of the changes are economically driven. You have an economic ideology and it determines not only what education looks like but also the procedures and arrangements that education is governed by.

What changes would I like to see in the role? I'm reasonably comfortable in the role of Chairman. I don't think that you can make many changes to it. The Chair is there to perform a function. The Chair occupies a particular position in relation to everybody else but I don't think commands a higher position than anybody else and I don't think the Chair's opinion is more valuable than anybody elses and I think the only thing you can do is try to ensure that the person occupying that role isn't allowed to develop a sense of self importance which I think is fatal to the role of the Chair and damaging to the progress of the meeting.

Ante.

Question 18 - The planning for the Governors meeting, I think we've looked at.

Question 19 - I think we've look at. I usually do have a view of the sorts of things that need to be achieved but not the detail, the range of outcomes which are possible, but it's really for the meeting to determine which of the outcomes is the chosen one. That's not my job. If I have information which is useful to people in formulating a view then I think I have a responsibility to put that information on the table and I think as well a responsibility to periodically review what has been said so far, so that other people can be reminded of what the arguments are, for one point or view or another, but it isn't the role of the Chair to make up the mind of the meeting.

Ant



How do I feel before a meeting starts. Well I would say nervous. Nervous because you want to do the best that you can within that situation for the people who are there and more particularly for the children that the Governing Body is responsible for and a wrong decision, I think, could be very serious in its implications, potentially serious in its implications, but if you've got a good Head Teacher there and if you've got a supportive LEA as well, that provides the right sort of information, that provides the right support to the Governing Body, then I think the nervousness is just really about how you might perform and what you might pick up or miss in the discussions. It isn't about being left high and dry in a meeting, left with no knowledge of which ways you could possibly go, but always nervous.

Feelings I've had at the end of meetings. Well, I think always you feel that perhaps something didn't quite go the way that you'd anticipated it might, not in terms of the decision but in terms of the way you handled a discussion, you maybe think that you could have been more supportive at certain points in the discussion than you were. Sometimes I've felt that the meeting has gone very well and most of the time I would think that the meeting has adequately fulfilled its purpose. I've never been in a situation where I've had to feel relieved that we've got to the end of a meeting. I think perhaps some people might in very difficult Governing Bodies, they might think, oh God how am I going to get through till 3.30 or 7.30 or whatever. There isn't that kind of frantic sense about the meetings.

Personal targets to achieve. Well, I suppose a personal target would be to feel that by the time I get to the end of my term of office the rest of the Governors and, hopefully by implication, the school, feel that I've served them properly and that if I've done anything in any of the meetings people can perceive that it has only been from an intention to assist the school and not to have a sense of personal triumph about any point that's been discussed and I would say that's the only target that I set myself, that people would feel that the motivation has only been from the point of view of working for the school and not putting something on a CV or practising a technique that might be useful somewhere else, or something like that and success or failure, well, dear me. I would feel that I'd failed if people stopped attending the meetings, if people didn't want to come to the meetings. If people sat in the meetings looking anxious or if they seemed to be leaving the meetings feeling aggrieved or unhappy or awkward about what the outcomes had been and I suppose measuring success is the reverse of that. I would feel that my position was operating effectively if people just felt that they were able to make the contribution they felt they could best make in that situation and that the school was getting proper service from its Governors and the staff in the school and again, most importantly, the children were getting the kind of support that they need and it is within the province of the Governors to provide. I think that's it.

## **Appendix 4**

These are extracts from diaries completed by Chairs of governors.

- Diary 1 is from a Chair of an aided comprehensive school in Southshire
- Diary 2 is from a Chair of a high school in Northshire
- Diary 3 is from a Chair of a primary school in Southshire



# **The role of the Chair of governors**

## **Chairman's Diary**

Chairman's Diary

Date 19.4.99  
10.00 am

(at school)

Event

(eg. telephone call  
meeting with Head,  
Governors meeting)

1:1 talk with HT over most recent  
developments re 2 long-term absences;  
brief mention of some budget-related  
items; 'caretaker' issues (on-going)

Action taken by you

(Contacted LEA,  
chaired meeting,  
followed up actions)

No positive follow-up action:  
await developments - if any -  
re l.t. absences now returned to  
school. Other action is  
taken re Finance sub 20/4/99

Your feelings about action  
taken by you

Aware of general/specific  
implications of issue; no  
cause for concern yet re  
budget issues. (including  
caretaker)

Any problem areas?

(No progress made,  
lack of information,  
Disagreement with  
Head/LEA/Governors)

No problem areas.

Rating of today's events

Very positive ☒  
Positive ☐  
Unclear ☐  
Unhappy ☐

Length of time spent on today's event

20 mins



Chairman's Diary

Date 20.4.99  
4.00 pm

Event

(eg. telephone call  
meeting with Head,  
Governors meeting)

Chair Finance Int Committee:  
draft budget.

Action taken by you

(Contacted LEA,  
chaired meeting,  
followed up actions)

Meeting chaired effectively -  
objective achieved - some  
clarification of items necessary for  
some gov. (some misunderstanding of  
how to use "unallocated/development" funds).

Your feelings about action  
taken by you

General progress quite satisfying  
- some 'development' items seemed  
and built in to draft; some  
then markers set down.

Any problem areas?

(No progress made,  
lack of information,  
Disagreement with  
Head/LEA/Governors)

Some governments not fully  
aware of restrictions and  
potentials within a draft  
budget - likely to be  
necessary to make some  
points to full gov. body

Rating of today's events

Very positive  
Positive  
Unclear  
Unhappy

✓  
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Length of time spent on today's event

1h 45

Chairman's Diary

Date 23.4.99  
2.15pm

(in school)

Event

(eg. telephone call  
meeting with Head,  
Governors meeting)

brief exchange of info with HT  
concerning I.T. absence, etc +  
current temporary (?) illness

Action taken by you

(Contacted LEA,  
chaired meeting,  
followed up actions)

None

Your feelings about action  
taken by you

Satisfied

Any problem areas?

(No progress made,  
lack of information,  
Disagreement with  
Head/LEA/Governors)

Potential lines of  
development on issue  
being 'linked in' -  
needs further, prolonged  
discussion.

Rating of today's events

Very positive  
Positive  
Unclear  
Unhappy

✓  
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|  
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Length of time spent on today's event

10 mins



Chairman's Diary

Date 27 April

Event

(eg.telephone call  
meeting with Head,  
Governors meeting)

in school to teach: end of session  
brief meeting with HT - keep  
abreast of staffing issues.

Action taken by you

(Contacted LEA,  
chaired meeting,  
followed up actions)

none needed

Your feelings about action  
taken by you

A.C.

Any problem areas?

(No progress made,  
lack of information,  
Disagreement with  
Head/LEA/Governors)

none

Rating of today's events

Very positive  
Positive  
Unclear  
Unhappy

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Length of time spent on today's event

10 mins

Chairman's Diary

Date 29 April.

Event

(eg. telephone call  
meeting with Head,  
Governors meeting)

in School to teach.

work with HT / BHT about  
Round of Achievement presentation  
in evening

Action taken by you

(Contacted LEA,  
chaired meeting,  
followed up actions)

attended meeting / presented  
certificates.

Your feelings about action  
taken by you

Very pleased to play  
part in achievement of  
achievement.

Any problem areas?

(No progress made,  
lack of information,  
Disagreement with  
Head/LEA/Governors)

no

Rating of today's events

Very positive  
Positive  
Unclear  
Unhappy

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Length of time spent on today's event shall 3 hours.



Chairman's Diary

Date 4 May

Event

(eg. telephone call  
meeting with Head,  
Governors meeting)

Meeting with HT: Update on  
Long Term Staff Structure; developments  
on capital project bid.

Action taken by you

(Contacted LEA,  
chaired meeting,  
followed up actions)

none

Your feelings about action  
taken by you

none

Any problem areas?

(No progress made,  
lack of information,  
Disagreement with  
Head/LEA/Governors)

Frustration of not being  
able to progress staff  
structure issue

Rating of today's events

Very positive  
Positive  
Unclear  
Unhappy

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|/||  
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||

Length of time spent on today's event

20 mins

Chairman's Diary

Date 10 May

Event

(eg. telephone call  
meeting with Head,  
Governors meeting)

discussing agenda for  
meeting next day.

Action taken by you

(Contacted LEA,  
chaired meeting,  
followed up actions)

Moved forward on other  
staffing issues - likely  
to clarify small staffing

Your feelings about action  
taken by you

Action intended to clear  
away some issues +  
make more effective  
disposition of staff

Any problem areas?

(No progress made,  
lack of information,  
Disagreement with  
Head/LEA/Governors)

none

Rating of today's events

Very positive ☒  
Positive ☐  
Unclear ☐  
Unhappy ☐

Length of time spent on today's event

1 hr



Chairman's Diary

Date 11 May

Event

(eg. telephone call  
meeting with Head,  
Governors meeting)

Governors' meeting

Action taken by you

(Contacted LEA,  
chaired meeting,  
followed up actions)

Chaired meeting  
- moved quickly  
through the major items  
- some put back to  
the Committee.

Your feelings about action  
taken by you

Will make action  
by school to be  
more effective in  
short term

Any problem areas?

(No progress made,  
lack of information,  
Disagreement with  
Head/LEA/Governors)

low has a meeting  
- sense of frustration  
that some points  
had been delayed

Rating of today's events

Very positive  
Positive  
Unclear  
Unhappy

✓  
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Length of time spent on today's event

2 hrs

Chairman's Diary

Date 12 May

Event

(eg. telephone call  
meeting with Head,  
Governors meeting)

Working day with SM1  
on preparation of S.D.P

Action taken by you

(Contacted LEA,  
chaired meeting,  
followed up actions)

Clarified concepts of S.D.P  
function and form;  
invited SM1 to have  
different perspective onto  
broader issues

Your feelings about action  
taken by you

Very useful contribution

Any problem areas?

(No progress made,  
lack of information,  
Disagreement with  
Head/LEA/Governors)

None

Rating of today's events

Very positive  
Positive  
Unclear  
Unhappy

✓  
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Length of time spent on today's event

4 1/2 hrs



Chairman's Diary

Date 18 May

Event

(eg. telephone call  
meeting with Head,  
Governors meeting)

Meeting with HT/DHT (curriculum)  
on points to be covered  
in Staffing sub. com. later  
in week.

Action taken by you

(Contacted LEA,  
chaired meeting,  
followed up actions)

Supported main strategy  
to resolve series of  
minor staffing issues

Your feelings about action  
taken by you

Supportive of both HT/DHT  
+ able to give some  
positive suggestions to  
simplify issues.

Any problem areas?

(No progress made,  
lack of information,  
Disagreement with  
Head/LEA/Governors)

None

Rating of today's events

Very positive  
Positive  
Unclear  
Unhappy

✓  
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Length of time spent on today's event

45 mins

# **The role of the Chair of governors**

## **Chairman's Diary**



TUES

Chairman's Diary

Date 5.5.98

Event

(eg. telephone call  
meeting with Head,  
Governors meeting)

MEETING WITH CLERK TO CONFIRM  
THURSDAY EVENING'S FULL GOVS AGENDA  
ETC.

Action taken by you

(Contacted LEA,  
chaired meeting,  
followed up actions)

NO LAST MINUTE ITEMS,  
ALL PAPERWORK ALREADY OUT,  
MAIN FOCUS - RECEIVE OFSTED  
REPORT

Your feelings about action  
taken by you

NO ACTION

Any problem areas?

(No progress made,  
lack of information,  
Disagreement with  
Head/LEA/Governors)

NO

Rating of today's events

Very positive	<u>✓</u>
Positive	<u>—</u>
Unclear	<u>—</u>
Unhappy	<u>—</u>

Length of time spent on today's event

25 mins

Chairman's Diary

Date

WED  
6.5.98

Event

(eg. telephone call  
meeting with Head,  
Governors meeting)

MEETING WITH HEAD.

Action taken by you

(Contacted LEA,  
chaired meeting,  
followed up actions)

BRIEF DISCUSSION ON ASPECTS  
OF STAFFING.  
TO ARRANGE MEETING WITH  
CHAIR OF STAFFING, H. T. & S. A.

Your feelings about action  
taken by you

TO CONTACT CHAIR OF STAFFING  
THURSDAY EVENING

Any problem areas?

(No progress made,  
lack of information,  
Disagreement with  
Head/LEA/Governors)

No

Rating of today's events

Very positive

Positive

Unclear

Unhappy

—  
✓  
—  
—

Length of time spent on today's event

15 mins



Chairman's Diary

Date Wed  
6.5.98

Event

(eg. telephone call  
meeting with Head,  
Governors meeting)

"MEETINGS" WITH VARIOUS STAFF

Action taken by you

(Contacted LEA,  
chaired meeting,  
followed up actions)

CANCEL PREMISES COMM MTG  
AS STAFF INVOLVED IN INSPEC  
FEEDBACK

Your feelings about action  
taken by you

COMPROMISE TO SAVE SOME  
STAFF HAVING A 6 HOURS NON-STOP  
MEETINGS.  
CLERK ASKED TO CONTACT MEMBERS  
OF COMM.

Any problem areas?

(No progress made,  
lack of information,  
Disagreement with  
Head/LEA/Governors)

ALL AGREED

Rating of today's events

Very positive	—
Positive	✓
Unclear	—
Unhappy	—

Length of time spent on today's event

20min

Chairman's Diary

Date THURS  
7.5.98

Event

(eg. telephone call  
meeting with Head,  
Governors meeting)

SHORT LISTING - MATERNITY COVERS  
2 GOVS + HEAD

Action taken by you

(Contacted LEA,  
chaired meeting,  
followed up actions)

2 SHORT LISTS PREPARED

Your feelings about action  
taken by you

SATISFACTORY

Any problem areas?

(No progress made,  
lack of information,  
Disagreement with  
Head/LEA/Governors)

NONE

Rating of today's events

Very positive ✓  
Positive  
Unclear  
Unhappy

Length of time spent on today's event

50 mins



Chairman's Diary

Date THURS  
7.5.98

Event

(eg. telephone call  
meeting with Head,  
Governors meeting)

FULL GOVERNORS MEETING

Action taken by you

(Contacted LEA,  
chaired meeting,  
followed up actions)

RECEIVE INSPECTION REPORT  
+ OTHER BUSINESS  
CHAIRING MEETING

CONGRATULATIONS LETTERS TO STAFF

Your feelings about action  
taken by you

POSITIVE

Any problem areas?

(No progress made,  
lack of information,  
Disagreement with  
Head/LEA/Governors)

No

Rating of today's events

Very positive  
Positive  
Unclear  
Unhappy

✓  
—  
—  
—

Length of time spent on today's event

MEETING 1 3/4 HOURS  
LETTERS 20 MINUTES  
READING  
DRAFT REPORT 2 HOURS

Chairman's Diary

FRI

Date

8.5.98

Event

(eg. telephone call  
meeting with Head,  
Governors meeting)

POST INSPECTION CELEBRATION  
- CEILIDH -

Action taken by you

(Contacted LEA,  
chaired meeting,  
followed up actions)

'CUTTING THE CAKE'

Your feelings about action  
taken by you

A WELL CUT CAKE.

Any problem areas?

(No progress made,  
lack of information,  
Disagreement with  
Head/LEA/Governors)

STAYING SOBER

Rating of today's events

Very positive  
Positive  
Unclear  
Unhappy

✓  
—  
—  
—

Length of time spent on today's event

3 hours



Sun

Chairman's Diary

Date 10.5.98

Event

(eg. telephone call  
meeting with Head,  
Governors meeting)

"Homework"

Action taken by you

(Contacted LEA,  
chaired meeting,  
followed up actions)

LOOKING AT AGENDA ITEMS  
FOR FINANCE MEETING, POSSIBLE  
WELFARE ~~MEETING~~ MEETING & ~~DEF~~.  
DFEE ETC PAPERWORK

Your feelings about action  
taken by you

ALL PAPERS PREPARED FOR  
FINANCE, DFEE LEAFLETS  
ORDERED; FURTHER THOUGHT  
TO BE GIVEN TO WELFARE

Any problem areas?

(No progress made,  
lack of information,  
Disagreement with  
Head/LEA/Governors)

ONLY 'WELFARE' - EXCLUSIONS  
LITERATURE TO BE STUDIED

Rating of today's events

Very positive  
Positive  
Unclear  
Unhappy

—  
✓  
—  
—

Length of time spent on today's event

50 mins

Chairman's Diary

Date Mon.  
11.5.98

Event

(eg. telephone call  
meeting with Head,  
Governors meeting)

MEETING HEAD + CHAIR OF  
STAFFING (ALSO V-CHAIR OF GOV. BODY)

Action taken by you

(Contacted LEA,  
chaired meeting,  
followed up actions)

DISCUSSION OF LONG TERM  
SIR. NOT. STAFFING PLAN.

Your feelings about action  
taken by you

A GOOD LOOK AT THE  
ALTERNATIVES OPEN TO US  
BEARING IN MIND N.T.'S  
PRESENT REVIEW.

Any problem areas?

(No progress made,  
lack of information,  
Disagreement with  
Head/LEA/Governors)

NONE, TOTAL AGREEMENT

Rating of today's events

Very positive  
Positive  
Unclear  
Unhappy

✓  
—  
—  
—  
—

Length of time spent on today's event

65 mins



Chairman's Diary

TUES

Date 12.5.98

Event

(eg. telephone call  
meeting with Head,  
Governors meeting)

INTERVIEWING  
MATERNITY COVERS

Action taken by you

(Contacted LEA,  
chaired meeting,  
followed up actions)

APPOINTMENTS MADE  
CHAIRMAN

Your feelings about action  
taken by you

SATISFACTORY

Any problem areas?

(No progress made,  
lack of information,  
Disagreement with  
Head/LEA/Governors)

NONE

Rating of today's events

Very positive  
Positive  
Unclear  
Unhappy

✓  
—  
—  
—

Length of time spent on today's event

2 1/2 HRS

Chairman's Diary

WED

Date 13.5.98

Event

(eg. telephone call  
meeting with Head,  
Governors meeting)

SHORTLISTING - 3 VACANCIES  
2ND IN ENGLISH  
MFL (STAFF RESIGNATION)  
MFL (NEW POS)

Action taken by you

(Contacted LEA,  
chaired meeting,  
followed up actions)

Short lists prepared in  
conjunction with SMT, HoD + other  
GOVS.

Your feelings about action  
taken by you

Some very strong candidates - two  
good lists

Any problem areas?

(No progress made,  
lack of information,  
Disagreement with  
Head/LEA/Governors)

None

Rating of today's events

Very positive	✓
Positive	—
Unclear	—
Unhappy	—

Length of time spent on today's event

1 hr 40 mins



Chairman's Diary

Date THURS  
14.5.98

Event

(eg.telephone call  
meeting with Head,  
Governors meeting)

meeting of Chavs + members  
of Educ Appeals Comms (Admissions  
+ Exclusion)

Action taken by you

(Contacted LEA,  
chaired meeting,  
followed up actions)

listened + took part in discussion

Your feelings about action  
taken by you

—

Any problem areas?

(No progress made,  
lack of information,  
Disagreement with  
Head/LEA/Governors)

Informative meeting but  
little 'new' content.

Rating of today's events

Very positive ☒  
Positive ☐  
Unclear ☐  
Unhappy ☐

Length of time spent on today's event

2m15 mins

Chairman's Diary

Date Mon  
18.5.98

Event

(eg. telephone call  
meeting with Head,  
Governors meeting)

MEETING FINANCE COMM.

Action taken by you

(Contacted LEA,  
chaired meeting,  
followed up actions)

CHAired.

REGULAR MEETINGS - NO  
FOLLOW-UP ACTION

Your feelings about action  
taken by you

Any problem areas?

(No progress made,  
lack of information,  
Disagreement with  
Head/LEA/Governors)

STILL AWAITING RESPONSE  
TO QUERIES. VARIOUS STAFF  
TO CHASE

Rating of today's events

Very positive	—
Positive	✓
Unclear	—
Unhappy	—

Length of time spent on today's event

1hr 10 mins



Chairman's Diary

WED

Date 20.5.98

Event

(eg. telephone call  
meeting with Head,  
Governors meeting)

INTERVIEWS FRENCH POSTS

Action taken by you

(Contacted LEA,  
chaired meeting,  
followed up actions)

CHAired - 2 INTERVIEWS REACH  
CANDIDATE, FEEDBACK  
FROM OTHER GROUPS  
WHO SAW THEM &  
APPOINTMENTS MADE  
...

Your feelings about action  
taken by you

2 EXCELLENT APPTS.

Any problem areas?

(No progress made,  
lack of information,  
Disagreement with  
Head/LEA/Governors)

Rating of today's events

Very positive  
Positive  
Unclear  
Unhappy

✓  
—  
—  
—

Length of time spent on today's event

7½ HRS

Chairman's Diary

WED  
~~THUR~~  
Date 20.5.98

Event

(eg. telephone call  
meeting with Head,  
Governors meeting)

MEETING OF MONKSSEATON HS &  
WHITLEY BAY HS. PYRAMIDS RE NT  
REVIEW OF SCHOOLS.

Action taken by you

(contacted LEA,  
chaired meeting,  
followed up actions)

LISTENED TO (& LEARNED FROM)  
SPEECH BY DAVID PEECHY  
DIR. OF ED SUFFOLK +  
COMPARING 2 & 3 TIER  
SYSTEMS

Your feelings about action  
taken by you

Any problem areas?

(No progress made,  
lack of information,  
Disagreement with  
Head/LEA/Governors)

Rating of today's events

Very positive  
Positive  
Unclear  
Unhappy

☒  
☐  
☐  
☐

Length of time spent on today's event

2 1/4 HRS

(THATS 3 3/4 HRS TODAY - THANK  
GOODNESS IT WHIT WEEK SOON!)



WHIT WEEK + AWAY TO FRANCE WITH  
MIDDLE SCHOOL FOR ONE WEEK, SO, ILL  
FINISH WITH W/C 8.6.98.

Chairman's Diary

Date 8.6.98

Event

(eg. telephone call  
meeting with Head,  
Governors meeting)

MEETING WITH HEAD

Action taken by you

(Contacted LEA,  
chaired meeting,  
followed up actions)

TO DISCUSS (HOW) RECEIPT  
OF HSP. REPORT + GENERAL  
SCHOOL MATTERS

Your feelings about action  
taken by you

OK

Any problem areas?

(No progress made,  
lack of information,  
Disagreement with  
Head/LEA/Governors)

No

Rating of today's events

Very positive  
Positive  
Unclear  
Unhappy

✓  
—  
—  
—

Length of time spent on today's event

40 mins

Chairman's Diary

Date 11.6.98

Event

(eg. telephone call  
meeting with Head,  
Governors meeting)

MEETING SMT & CHAIRS  
OF SUB. COMMITTEES

Action taken by you

(Contacted LEA,  
chaired meeting,  
followed up actions)

RECEIVE LSP. REPORT &  
DISCUSS ACTION PLAN  
(WE WERE ALREADY AWARE  
OF KEY POINTS.)

Your feelings about action  
taken by you

VERY POSITIVE

Any problem areas?

(No progress made,  
lack of information,  
Disagreement with  
Head/LEA/Governors)

ONLY LACK OF MONEY

Rating of today's events

Very positive ☒  
Positive ☐  
Unclear ☐  
Unhappy ☐

Length of time spent on today's event

2 1/4 HOURS

+ TIME AFTERWARDS TO  
STUDY REPORT - 3 1/2 HOURS



Chairman's Diary

Date 11.6.98

Event

(eg. telephone call  
meeting with Head,  
Governors meeting)

ARRANGING MEMBERS FOR  
WELFARE COMM PANEL (EXCLUSION)

Action taken by you

(Contacted LEA,  
chaired meeting,  
followed up actions)

TEL. MEMBERS

Your feelings about action  
taken by you

OK

Any problem areas?

(No progress made,  
lack of information,  
Disagreement with  
Head/LEA/Governors)

Rating of today's events

Very positive  
Positive  
Unclear  
Unhappy

✓  
=  
=  
=

Length of time spent on today's event

15mins

Chairman's Diary

Date 12.6.98

Event

(eg.telephone call  
meeting with Head,  
Governors meeting)

IN VIBILATING AT GCSE'S (TWO  
GOVS. PRESENT RELEASING SAME NO.OF  
STAFF FOR TEACHING DUTIES)

Action taken by you

(Contacted LEA,  
chaired meeting,  
followed up actions)

—

Your feelings about action  
taken by you

—

Any problem areas?

(No progress made,  
lack of information,  
Disagreement with  
Head/LEA/Governors)

—

Rating of today's events

Very positive 7  
Positive —  
Unclear —  
Unhappy —

Length of time spent on today's event

1 hr 50 mins



# **The role of the Chair of governors**

## **Chairman's Diary**

Chairman's Diary

Date 19.4.99.

Event  
(eg.telephone call  
meeting with Head,  
Governors meeting)

TELEPHONE CONVERSATION.

Action taken by you  
(Contacted LEA,  
chaired meeting,  
followed up actions)

PHONED DEPUTY HEAD-TEACHER  
(a) ABOUT ARRANGEMENTS FOR MEETING  
OF FINANCE SUB-COMMITTEE.  
(b) STAFFING PROBLEMS FOR 1999-2000  
(c) TIMETABLE PROGRESS, FOR NEXT YEAR

Your feelings about action  
taken by you

GOOD PROGRESS ON ALL THREE  
HEADINGS.

Any problem areas?  
(No progress made,  
lack of information,  
Disagreement with  
Head/LEA/Governors)

-

Rating of today's events

Very positive  
Positive ☒  
Unclear  
Unhappy

Length of time spent on today's event

12 MINUTES.



Chairman's Diary

Date 19.4.99

Event

(eg.telephone call  
meeting with Head,  
Governors meeting)

TELEPHONE CALL

Action taken by you

(Contacted LEA,  
chaired meeting,  
followed up actions)

CONTACTED BY LEA  
REGARDING DATE FOR  
A PERMANENT EXCLUSION

Your feelings about action  
taken by you

Any problem areas?

(No progress made,  
lack of information,  
Disagreement with  
Head/LEA/Governors)

Rating of today's events

Very positive  
Positive  
Unclear  
Unhappy

✓  
—  
—  
—

Length of time spent on today's event

5 MINS.

Chairman's Diary

Date 19.4.99

Event

(eg. telephone call  
meeting with Head,  
Governors meeting)

MEETING  
FINANCE/BUILDING COMMITTEE

Action taken by you

(Contacted LEA,  
chaired meeting,  
followed up actions)

CHAIRING MEETING.  
TO DRAFT THE SCHOOL BUDGET  
1999-2000.

Your feelings about action  
taken by you

REPORT SUBMITTED BY DEPUTY  
HEAD WHO ANSWERED ANY  
QUERIES IN A VERY POSITIVE  
MANNER

Any problem areas?

(No progress made,  
lack of information,  
Disagreement with  
Head/LEA/Governors)

FURTHER INFORMATION REQUIRED  
ON PROPOSED DEPARTMENTAL  
ALLOCATIONS FOR 1999-2000

Rating of today's events

Very positive  
Positive  
Unclear  
Unhappy

✓  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Length of time spent on today's event

1 HOUR 15 MINS.



Chairman's Diary

Date 21.4.99.

Event

(eg. telephone call  
meeting with Head,  
Governors meeting)

TELEPHONE CALL FROM PARENT  
GOVERNOR

Action taken by you

(Contacted LEA,  
chaired meeting,  
followed up actions)

GOVERNOR GAVE APOLOGIES  
FOR MEETING OF 28.4.99.  
(WOULD ARRIVE LATE)

Your feelings about action  
taken by you

THE GOVERNOR ASKED FOR  
CLARIFICATION OF AN ITEM  
ON THE AGENDA. SATISFIED.  
WITH OUTCOME

Any problem areas?

(No progress made,  
lack of information,  
Disagreement with  
Head/LEA/Governors)

Rating of today's events

Very positive  
Positive  
Unclear  
Unhappy

✓  
—  
—  
—

Length of time spent on today's event

8 mins.

Chairman's Diary

Date 22.4.99

Event

(eg. telephone call  
meeting with Head,  
Governors meeting)

TELEPHONE CALL  
FROM HEAD-TEACHER.

Action taken by you

(Contacted LEA,  
chaired meeting,  
followed up actions)

DISCUSSED ADVERTISEMENT  
FOR SPECIAL NEEDS CO-ORDINATION  
AND  
APPOINTMENT OF A PART-TIME  
SECRETARY TO REPLACE  
A RETIREMENT.

Your feelings about action  
taken by you

SATISFIED WITH ARRANGEMENTS

Any problem areas?

(No progress made,  
lack of information,  
Disagreement with  
Head/LEA/Governors)

—

Rating of today's events

Very positive  
Positive  
Unclear  
Unhappy

—  
✓  
—  
—

Length of time spent on today's event

10 MINUTES.



Chairman's Diary

Date 27.4.99

Event

(eg.telephone call  
meeting with Head,  
Governors meeting)

(INTERVIEW) MEETING AT SCHOOL To  
APPOINT 2 TEACHERS  
1 PART-TIME SECRETARY

Action taken by you

(Contacted LEA,  
chaired meeting,  
followed up actions)

CHAIR - MEETING.

Your feelings about action  
taken by you

MADE THREE APPOINTMENTS.  
VERY IMPRESSED WITH  
THE CANDIDATES

Any problem areas?

(No progress made,  
lack of information,  
Disagreement with  
Head/LEA/Governors)

Rating of today's events

Very positive  
Positive  
Unclear  
Unhappy

✓  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Length of time spent on today's event

2h 45m.

Chairman's Diary

Date 28.4.99

Event

(eg. telephone call  
meeting with Head,  
Governors meeting)

GOVERNORS MEETING  
(SPECIAL MEETING) 0

Action taken by you

(Contacted LEA,  
chaired meeting,  
followed up actions)

CHAired MEETING.  
PROMISED TO SEEK CLARIFICATION  
OF A POINT ON MATTERS  
ARISING.

Your feelings about action  
taken by you

THE MATTER ARISING WAS  
RESOLVED AND THE GOVERNOR  
WAS SATISFIED WITH THE OUTCOME.

Any problem areas?

(No progress made,  
lack of information,  
Disagreement with  
Head/LEA/Governors)

Rating of today's events

Very positive  
Positive  
Unclear  
Unhappy

✓  
|||

Length of time spent on today's event

1 H 5 M.



Chairman's Diary

Date 28.4.99

Event

(eg. telephone call  
meeting with Head,  
Governors meeting)

MEETING OF

PAY REVIEW COMMITTEE

Action taken by you

(Contacted LEA,  
chaired meeting,  
followed up actions)

CHAIRLED MEETING,

Your feelings about action  
taken by you

REVIEWED STAFF SALARIES  
FOR SEPT. 1999.  
ALSO HEAD TEACHER'S &  
DEPUTY HEAD TEACHER'S PAY

Any problem areas?

(No progress made,  
lack of information,  
Disagreement with  
Head/LEA/Governors)

Rating of today's events

Very positive  
Positive  
Unclear  
Unhappy



Length of time spent on today's event

1 H 15m

Chairman's Diary

Date 5.5.99

Event

(eg. telephone call  
meeting with Head,  
Governors meeting)

MEETING OF PUPIL DISCIPLINARY  
COMMITTEE.

Action taken by you

(Contacted LEA,  
chaired meeting,  
followed up actions)

CHAired MEETING  
MINUTES OF.  
MATTER ARISING FROM MEETING  
OF 26/1/99 TO SEEK CLARIFICATION

Your feelings about action  
taken by you

SPOKE TO HEAD-TEACHER RE  
ABOVE. BUT NOT COMPLETELY  
HAPPY WITH THE ANSWER TO  
MY QUERY.

Any problem areas?

(No progress made,  
lack of information,  
Disagreement with  
Head/LEA/Governors)

Rating of today's events

Very positive  
Positive  
Unclear  
Unhappy

✓  

Length of time spent on today's event

1 H 30 M



Chairman's Diary

Date 7.5.99

Event

(eg. telephone call  
meeting with Head,  
Governors meeting).

TELEPHONE CALL FROM  
PARENT GOVERNOR

Action taken by you

(Contacted LEA,  
chaired meeting,  
followed up actions)

GOVERNOR GAVE APOLOGIES FOR  
A FUTURE MEETING WHO RAISED  
POINTS WHICH REQUIRED  
CLARIFICATION FROM MEETING  
OF PUPIL DISCIP. OF (5.5.99)

Your feelings about action  
taken by you

TOOK OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS  
OUTCOME OF CONVERSATION  
WITH H.T. OVER QUERY  
GOVERNOR NOT ENTIRELY  
SATISFIED. WILL RAISE THE  
ISSUE AT FUTURE GOVS. MEETING

Any problem areas?

(No progress made,  
lack of information,  
Disagreement with  
Head/LEA/Governors)

Rating of today's events

Very positive  
Positive  
Unclear  
Unhappy

☒  
☐  
☐  
☐

Length of time spent on today's event

15 MINUTES

Chairman's Diary

Date 11.4.99

Event

(eg. telephone call  
meeting with Head,  
Governors meeting)

SCHOOL VISIT. TO ASCERTAIN  
NUMBER OF APPLICANTS FOR  
SEN CO-ORDINATOR'S POST.

Action taken by you

(Contacted LEA,  
chaired meeting,  
followed up actions)

SPOKE TO DEPUTY HEAD TEACHER  
RE. APPOINTMENT. WHO GAVE  
ME LIST OF POSSIBLE  
APPLICANTS

Your feelings about action  
taken by you

Any problem areas?

(No progress made,  
lack of information,  
Disagreement with  
Head/LEA/Governors)

DISAPPOINTED WITH REPLIES  
TO VACANCY

Rating of today's events

Very positive  
Positive  
Unclear  
Unhappy

—  
—  
7

Length of time spent on today's event

20 MINS.



Chairman's Diary

Date 11.5.99

Event

(eg. telephone call  
meeting with Head,  
Governors meeting)

TELEPHONE CALL

Action taken by you

(Contacted LEA,  
chaired meeting,  
followed up actions)

CONTACTED LEA.

Your feelings about action  
taken by you

Any problem areas?

(No progress made,  
lack of information,  
Disagreement with  
Head/LEA/Governors)

NO PROGRESS MADE.  
NOT HAPPY ABOUT MY  
QUERY.

Rating of today's events

Very positive  
Positive  
Unclear  
Unhappy

—  
—  
✓  
—

Length of time spent on today's event

5 MINS.

Chairman's Diary

Date 13.4.99

Event

(eg. telephone call  
meeting with Head,  
Governors meeting)

SCHOOL VISIT

Action taken by you

(Contacted LEA,  
chaired meeting,  
followed up actions)

SPOKE TO HEAD TEACHER  
RE TWO ITEMS OF IMPORTANCE

Your feelings about action  
taken by you

Any problem areas?

(No progress made,  
lack of information,  
Disagreement with  
Head/LEA/Governors)

NO PROGRESS ON FIRST  
ITEM.

SECOND ITEM. BOTH H/T  
AND MYSELF IN COMPLETE  
AGREEMENT.

Rating of today's events

Very positive  
Positive  
Unclear  
Unhappy

~~Very~~  
Positive  
Unclear  
Unhappy

Length of time spent on today's event

40



Chairman's Diary

Date 13.5.99

Event

(eg. telephone call  
meeting with Head,  
Governors meeting)

SCHOOL VISIT.

Action taken by you

(Contacted LEA,  
chaired meeting,  
followed up actions)

CONTACTED DEPUTY HEAD.

Your feelings about action  
taken by you

SPOKE TO DEPUTY RE. QUERY  
ON SALARIES. (L), STAFFING!

Any problem areas?

(No progress made,  
lack of information,  
Disagreement with  
Head/LEA/Governors)

LACK OF INFORMATION (W)  
DEPUTY TO SEEK CLARIFICATION  
FROM LEA.

Rating of today's events

Very positive  
Positive  
Unclear  
Unhappy

—  
—  
✓  
—

Length of time spent on today's event

20 MINS

## Chairman's Diary

Date 13.5.99.

### Event

(eg.telephone call  
meeting with Head,  
Governors meeting)

# SCHOOL VISIT

## MEETING WITH A GOVERNOR

**Action taken by you**

(Contacted LEA,  
chaired meeting,  
followed up actions)

SPOKE TO GOVERNOR RE  
ANNUAL REPORT TO ~~GR~~ PARENTS  
(PRELIMINARY DISCUSSION)

Your feelings about action  
taken by you

## POSITIVE OUTCOME

**Any problem areas?**

(No progress made,  
lack of information,  
Disagreement with  
Head/LEA/Governors)

\* Good progress made.

### Rating of today's events

Very positive  
Positive  
Unclear  
Unhappy

—

**Length of time spent on today's event**

15 mins



Chairman's Diary

Date 14.5.99.

Event

(eg. telephone call  
meeting with Head,  
Governors meeting)

REPLY TO MESSAGE LEFT  
ON ANSWER MACHINE  
~~TELEPHONE CALL~~

Action taken by you

(Contacted LEA,  
chaired meeting,  
followed up actions)

CONTACTED L.E.A.  
(SPOKE TO PERSON)  
THEN PHONED ANOTHER  
OFFICER OF LEA. FOR  
INFORMATION)  
FURTHER TELEPHONE CALL

Your feelings about action  
taken by you

COMPLETELY HAPPY WITH  
OUTCOME OF ALL THREE  
CALLS.

Any problem areas?

(No progress made,  
lack of information,  
Disagreement with  
Head/LEA/Governors)

Rating of today's events

Very positive  
Positive  
Unclear  
Unhappy

✓  
—  
—  
—

Length of time spent on today's event

15 MINS.

## **Appendix 5**

**This is an example of the observation schedule used to observe meetings of governing bodies. An analysis of the observation is also included.**



**TEXT BOUND  
INTO  
THE SPINE**

13

1.  $\text{AgNO}_3$  a/c Cl $^-$ .

2 AGO 5- UCU.

### 3 Acquires

4. Animals

5. Action

6 Sm Cam: 17:



8

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10

CLEAR

△

३.

7

2

## Posit question

11-11-11

PERGUE TO QUEEN

Direct Acting

— MOVE —

11

- CONCLUDE

142-22987-112

सा. १०

3.40

- 326 -



**Abstract**

2

3

5

5

9

—

100

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Stamen 2/3

## POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

141

PERQUE TO QUEMOS

Direct Acting

— NONE —

11

RECAPITULATION  
TO MAKE  
HISTORY IN  
IN TELLING, &  
DEVELOP  
(4-15)

1- CONCLUDE

Handwritten signature: [Signature]

Charm

Jim Carney

4.10-4.10

$$(4.33)$$

## Role: examining

## PERFECT TO QUESTION

$$N_{\text{DUE}} = 20$$

Swan Mill

434

- 328 -

U

27 (Faukas)  
57778

2212  
Crawford, S  
Mass Plant

(C) 2 2 / 2 2 / 2 2 3 2 3 3 2 2 2 2 2 2 H

[illegible]

HT input 4.2kV.  
HT load 110 input bulb  
at 600 speed.

1) Mean boxes. (int'd)

五

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Answer.

151

Quina

STATION

217

STRECHER 21

1

4-36









St Simon's CE School Governing Body

Commentary on Observations of Governing Body : 12 November 1998

Meeting of full Governing Body - Termly

Number of Governors present - 10

Observations 1 : 3.40 pm to 4.00 pm

First 20 minutes covered first five items on agenda and 10.10.11 - Sub-Committees. Typical business part of meeting - appointment of Chair/Vice-Chair and minutes etc.

Chair appointed - user of parish. Contribution of previous role. Vice-Chair also re-appointed. No contest.

Chair initiated proceedings with prayer and then business items. First period marked by interaction between Chair and Head Teacher often in short bursts of commentary lasting less than one minute. This was largely over 'matters arising'.

Clerk had significant input in explaining and answering questions on role of sub-committee.

Little input from other governors. Only three governors made responses during this period which were characterised by short statements or questions.

In terms of number of inputs, period marked by Chair's action, but many inputs were questions to Governors or short statements.

Chair gave some direction to agenda in three prompts to move on (as observed).

Observation 2 : 4.10 pm to 4.30 pm

Period largely taken up by item 6 - sub-committees and 7 diocesan business.

Again predomination of interaction between Chair and Head Teacher with input, by way of explanation for Clerk.

Input for Chair marked by brief questions and short statements. More extensive statements on diocesan business.

Period marked by more significant input, but still only minor in comparison to Head and Chair, by other Governors. Five governors responded in some form, two with minor statements. Three governors asked questions for clarification for Clerk and Head Teacher and make short statements largely related to composition of sub-committees.

Chair allows discussion and interaction over issues raised. Vice-Chair, at 4.18 pm moves to make progress in terms of making decisions.

Chair moves agenda along other period of time.

Observation 3 : 4.30 pm to 4.50 pm

Period taken up by continuation of diocesan business and Head's report in the main. Under diocesan business, Chair continues to have input - questions and short statements. Other inputs of significance from two governors (one teacher governor other foundation) largely added to fundraising for foundation governor and Head Teacher report for Teacher Governor. Short input from three other governors related to fund raising (parent governor) and nominations for foundation governor and timing of mass from another foundation governor.

Period characterised by Head Teacher speaking to aspects of report and questions, ~~per~~<sup>from</sup> Chair. Head Teacher determined speed of delivery of report. Chair occasionally promoted progress in Head Teacher's report.

Inputs by three governors A, B, C, H minimal in this period.

Observation 4 : 4.50 pm to 5.10 pm

Period taken up by Head Teacher's report, designation of school and Director's reports.

Once again, inputs in terms of active questions/statement documented by intervention of Chair and Head, especially in relation to Head Teacher's Report.

However, the discussion on Head's report often distracted to 'minor' issues eg parental issue of ~~pr~~<sup>pr</sup>ms in school and timing of mass. Substitute issues of report ~~hmed~~<sup>hmed</sup> as a governor 'moved progress' through report on four separate occasions (this was Vice-Chair and done in spirit of meeting - non confrontational)

Chair's input characterised by questions/short statements.  
Head's input similar with one longer ~~instnce~~<sup>instance</sup> of explanation.

Other inputs were from two other governors in particular largely by way of short statements and occasional questions.

Inputs from three governors were of minor nature in terms of governors overall ~~business~~<sup>business</sup> at this time.

Adviser had significant input (approximately 10 minutes over six inputs) in Reports of Director. Little reaction to this part other than explanation from Head.

Observation 5 : 5.10 pm to 5.18 pm

Period taken up by adviser's concluding remarks on report and head teacher's explanation on 'targets'.

Clerk has brief input for information. Negligible input from other Governors.

Chair concluded meeting in a brief manner. No overall summary.



General Comments:-

Meeting characterised by:-

- Interplay of professional inputs
- Head, adviser in parts, clerk in parts, teacher governor in parts
- significant interplay between Head and Chair
- short statements, questions
- little evidence of long explanation (other than adviser on reports of director)
- Majority of governors said little other than brief comments on particular minor matters
- Input from governors tended to come from teacher governor and two foundation governors

Did Chair control/influence meeting:

Chair easy going approach - allowed discussion to broaden - kept on track by Vice-Chair at times

- interplay with Head, who sat deliberately distanced from Chair (for positive reasons)

What was interesting was the short, staccato interplay between main players.

Chair or Vice - influence

- possibly but as he was approachable, perhaps not so much as in other situations

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